



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Votes and Proceedings

Hansard

MONDAY, 27 NOVEMBER 2006

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SITTING DAYS—2006

Month	Date
February	7, 8, 9, 13, 14, 15, 16, 27, 28
March	1, 2, 27, 28, 29, 30
May	9, 10, 11, 22, 23, 24, 25, 29, 30, 31
June	1, 13, 14, 15, 19, 20, 21, 22
August	8, 9, 10, 14, 15, 16, 17
September	4, 5, 6, 7, 11, 12, 13, 14
October	9, 10, 11, 12, 16, 17, 18, 19, 30, 31
November	1, 2, 27, 28, 29, 30
December	4, 5, 6, 7

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**FORTY-FIRST PARLIAMENT
FIRST SESSION—SEVENTH PERIOD**

Governor-General

His Excellency Major-General Michael Jeffery, Companion in the Order of Australia, Com-
mander of the Royal Victorian Order, Military Cross

House of Representatives Officeholders

Speaker—The Hon. David Peter Maxwell Hawker MP

Deputy Speaker—The Hon. Ian Raymond Causley MP

Second Deputy Speaker—Mr Henry Alfred Jenkins MP

Members of the Speaker's Panel—The Hon. Dick Godfrey Harry Adams, Mr Phillip Anthony Barresi, the Hon. Bronwyn Kathleen Bishop, Mr Barry Wayne Haase, Mr Michael John Hatton, the Hon. Duncan James Colquhoun Kerr SC, Mr Peter John Lindsay, Mr Robert Francis McMullan, Mr Harry Vernon Quick, the Hon. Bruce Craig Scott, the Hon. Alexander Michael Somlyay, Mr Kim William Wilkie

Leader of the House—The Hon. Anthony John Abbott MP

Deputy Leader of the House—The Hon. Peter John McGauran MP

Manager of Opposition Business—Ms Julia Eileen Gillard MP

Deputy Manager of Opposition Business—Mr Anthony Norman Albanese MP

Party Leaders and Whips

Liberal Party of Australia

Leader—The Hon. John Winston Howard MP

Deputy Leader—The Hon. Peter Howard Costello MP

Chief Government Whip—Mr Kerry Joseph Bartlett MP

Government Whips—Mrs Joanna Gash MP and Mr Fergus Stewart McArthur MP

The Nationals

Leader—The Hon. Mark Anthony James Vaile MP

Deputy Leader—The Hon. Warren Errol Truss MP

Chief Whip—Mrs Kay Elizabeth Hull MP

Whip—Mr Paul Christopher Neville MP

Australian Labor Party

Leader—The Hon. Kim Christian Beazley MP

Deputy Leader—Ms Jennifer Louise Macklin MP

Chief Opposition Whip—The Hon. Leo Roger Spurway Price MP

Opposition Whips—Mr Michael David Danby MP and Ms Jill Griffiths Hall MP

Printed by authority of the House of Representatives

Members of the House of Representatives

Member	Division	Party
Abbott, Hon. Anthony John	Warringah, NSW	LP
Adams, Hon. Dick Godfrey Harry	Lyons, Tas	ALP
Albanese, Anthony Norman	Grayndler, NSW	ALP
Anderson, Hon. John Duncan	Gwydir, NSW	Nats
Andren, Peter James	Calare, NSW	Ind
Andrews, Hon. Kevin James	Menzies, Vic	LP
Bailey, Hon. Frances Esther	McEwen, Vic	LP
Baird, Hon. Bruce George	Cook, NSW	LP
Baker, Mark Horden	Braddon, Tas	LP
Baldwin, Hon. Robert Charles	Paterson, NSW	LP
Barresi, Phillip Anthony	Deakin, Vic	LP
Bartlett, Kerry Joseph	Macquarie, NSW	LP
Beazley, Hon. Kim Christian	Brand, WA	ALP
Bevis, Hon. Archibald Ronald	Brisbane, Qld	ALP
Billson, Hon. Bruce Fredrick	Dunkley, Vic	LP
Bird, Sharon	Cunningham, NSW	ALP
Bishop, Hon. Bronwyn Kathleen	Mackellar, NSW	LP
Bishop, Hon. Julie Isabel	Curtin, WA	LP
Bowen, Christopher Eyles	Prospect, NSW	ALP
Broadbent, Russell Evan	McMillan, Vic	LP
Brough, Hon. Malcolm Thomas	Longman, Qld	LP
Burke, Anna Elizabeth	Chisholm, Vic	ALP
Burke, Anthony Stephen	Watson, NSW	ALP
Byrne, Anthony Michael	Holt, Vic	ALP
Cadman, Hon. Alan Glyndwr	Mitchell, NSW	LP
Causley, Hon. Ian Raymond	Page, NSW	Nats
Ciobo, Steven Michele	Moncrieff, Qld	LP
Cobb, Hon. John Kenneth	Parkes, NSW	Nats
Corcoran, Ann Kathleen	Isaacs, Vic	ALP
Costello, Hon. Peter Howard	Higgins, Vic	LP
Crean, Hon. Simon Findlay	Hotham, Vic	ALP
Danby, Michael	Melbourne Ports, Vic	ALP
Downer, Hon. Alexander John Gosse	Mayo, SA	LP
Draper, Patricia	Makin, SA	LP
Dutton, Hon. Peter Craig	Dickson, Qld	LP
Edwards, Hon. Graham John	Cowan, WA	ALP
Elliot, Maria Justine	Richmond, NSW	ALP
Ellis, Annette Louise	Canberra, ACT	ALP
Ellis, Katherine Margaret	Adelaide, SA	ALP
Elson, Kay Selma	Forde, Qld	LP
Emerson, Craig Anthony	Rankin, Qld	ALP
Entsch, Hon. Warren George	Leichhardt, NSW	LP
Farmer, Hon. Patrick Francis	Macarthur, NSW	LP
Fawcett, David Julian	Wakefield, SA	LP
Ferguson, Laurence Donald Thomas	Reid, NSW	ALP
Ferguson, Martin John, AM	Batman, Vic	ALP
Ferguson, Michael Darrel	Bass, Tas	LP

Members of the House of Representatives

Member	Division	Party
Fitzgibbon, Joel Andrew	Hunter, NSW	ALP
Forrest, John Alexander	Mallee, Vic	Nats
Gambaro, Hon. Teresa	Petrie, Qld	LP
Garrett, Peter Robert, AM	Kingsford Smith, NSW	ALP
Gash, Joanna	Gilmore, NSW	LP
Georganas, Steven	Hindmarsh, SA	ALP
George, Jennie	Throsby, NSW	ALP
Georgiou, Petro	Kooyong, Vic	LP
Gibbons, Stephen William	Bendigo, Vic	ALP
Gillard, Julia Eileen	Lalor, Vic	ALP
Grierson, Sharon Joy	Newcastle, NSW	ALP
Griffin, Alan Peter	Bruce, Vic	ALP
Haase, Barry Wayne	Kalgoorlie, WA	LP
Hall, Jill Griffiths	Shortland, NSW	ALP
Hardgrave, Hon. Gary Douglas	Moreton, Qld	LP
Hartsuyker, Luke	Cowper, NSW	Nats
Hatton, Michael John	Blaxland, NSW	ALP
Hawker, Hon. David Peter Maxwell	Wannon, Vic	LP
Hayes, Christopher Patrick	Werriwa, NSW	ALP
Henry, Stuart	Hasluck, WA	LP
Hoare, Kelly Joy	Charlton, NSW	ALP
Hockey, Hon. Joseph Benedict	North Sydney, NSW	LP
Howard, Hon. John Winston	Bennelong, NSW	LP
Hull, Kay Elizabeth	Riverina, NSW	Nats
Hunt, Hon. Gregory Andrew	Flinders, Vic	LP
Irwin, Julia Claire	Fowler, NSW	ALP
Jenkins, Henry Alfred	Scullin, Vic	ALP
Jensen, Dennis Geoffrey	Tangney, WA	LP
Johnson, Michael Andrew	Ryan, Qld	LP
Jull, Hon. David Francis	Fadden, Qld	LP
Katter, Hon. Robert Carl	Kennedy, Qld	Ind
Keenan, Michael Fayat	Stirling, WA	LP
Kelly, Hon. De-Anne Margaret	Dawson, Qld	Nats
Kelly, Hon. Jacqueline Marie	Lindsay, NSW	LP
Kerr, Hon. Duncan James Colquhoun, SC	Denison, Tas	ALP
King, Catherine Fiona	Ballarat, Vic	ALP
Laming, Andrew Charles	Bowman, Qld	LP
Lawrence, Hon. Carmen Mary	Fremantle, WA	ALP
Ley, Hon. Sussan Penelope	Farrer, NSW	LP
Lindsay, Peter John	Herbert, Qld	LP
Livermore, Kirsten Fiona	Capricornia, Qld	ALP
Lloyd, Hon. James Eric	Robertson, NSW	LP
Macfarlane, Hon. Ian Elgin	Groom, Qld	LP
Macklin, Jennifer Louise	Jagajaga, Vic	ALP
Markus, Louise Elizabeth	Greenway, NSW	LP
May, Margaret Ann	McPherson, Qld	LP
McArthur, Fergus Stewart	Corangamite, Vic	LP

Members of the House of Representatives

Member	Division	Party
McClelland, Robert Bruce	Barton, NSW	ALP
McGauran, Hon. Peter John	Gippsland, Vic	Nats
McMullan, Robert Francis	Fraser, ACT	ALP
Melham, Daryl	Banks, NSW	ALP
Mirabella, Sophie	Indi, Vic	LP
Moylan, Hon. Judith Eleanor	Pearce, WA	LP
Murphy, John Paul	Lowe, NSW	ALP
Nairn, Hon. Gary Roy	Eden-Monaro, NSW	LP
Nelson, Hon. Brendan John	Bradfield, NSW	LP
Neville, Paul Christopher	Hinkler, Qld	Nats
O'Connor, Brendan Patrick John	Gorton, Vic	ALP
O'Connor, Gavan Michael	Corio, Vic	ALP
Owens, Julie Ann	Parramatta, NSW	ALP
Pearce, Hon. Christopher John	Aston, Vic	LP
Plibersek, Tanya Joan	Sydney, NSW	ALP
Price, Hon. Leo Roger Spurway	Chifley, NSW	ALP
Prosser, Hon. Geoffrey Daniel	Forrest, WA	LP
Pyne, Hon. Christopher Maurice	Sturt, SA	LP
Quick, Harry Vernon	Franklin, Tas	ALP
Randall, Don James	Canning, WA	LP
Richardson, Kym	Kingston, SA	LP
Ripoll, Bernard Fernando	Oxley, Qld	ALP
Robb, Hon. Andrew John, AO	Goldstein, Vic	LP
Roxon, Nicola Louise	Gellibrand, Vic	ALP
Rudd, Kevin Michael	Griffith, Qld	ALP
Ruddock, Hon. Philip Maxwell	Berowra, NSW	LP
Sawford, Rodney Weston	Port Adelaide, SA	ALP
Schultz, Albert John	Hume, NSW	LP
Scott, Hon. Bruce Craig	Maranoa, Qld	Nats
Secker, Patrick Damien	Barker, SA	LP
Sercombe, Robert Charles Grant	Maribyrnong, Vic	ALP
Slipper, Hon. Peter Neil	Fisher, Qld	LP
Smith, Anthony David Hawthorn	Casey, Vic	LP
Smith, Stephen Francis	Perth, WA	ALP
Snowdon, Hon. Warren Edward	Lingiari, NT	ALP
Somlyay, Hon. Alexander Michael	Fairfax, Qld	LP
Southcott, Andrew John	Boothby, SA	LP
Stone, Hon. Sharman Nancy	Murray, Vic	LP
Swan, Wayne Maxwell	Lilley, Qld	ALP
Tanner, Lindsay James	Melbourne, Vic	ALP
Thompson, Cameron Paul	Blair, Qld	LP
Thomson, Kelvin John	Wills, Vic	ALP
Ticehurst, Kenneth Vincent	Dobell, NSW	LP
Tollner, David William	Solomon, NT	CLP
Truss, Hon. Warren Errol	Wide Bay, Qld	Nats
Tuckey, Hon. Charles Wilson	O'Connor, WA	LP
Turnbull, Hon. Malcolm Bligh	Wentworth, NSW	LP
Vaile, Hon. Mark Anthony James	Lyne, NSW	Nats

Members of the House of Representatives

Member	Division	Party
Vale, Hon. Danna Sue	Hughes, NSW	LP
Vamvakinou, Maria	Calwell, Vic	ALP
Vasta, Ross Xavier	Bonner, Qld	LP
Wakelin, Barry Hugh	Grey, SA	LP
Washer, Malcolm James	Moore, WA	LP
Wilkie, Kim William	Swan, WA	ALP
Windsor, Antony Harold Curties	New England, NSW	Ind
Wood, Jason Peter	La Trobe, Vic	LP

PARTY ABBREVIATIONS

ALP—Australian Labor Party; LP—Liberal Party of Australia; Nats—The Nationals;
Ind—Independent; CLP—Country Liberal Party; AG—Australian Greens

Heads of Parliamentary Departments

Clerk of the Senate—H Evans
Clerk of the House of Representatives—I C Harris
Secretary, Department of Parliamentary Services—H R Penfold QC

HOWARD MINISTRY

Prime Minister	The Hon. John Winston Howard MP
Minister for Transport and Regional Services and Deputy Prime Minister	The Hon. Mark Anthony James Vaile MP
Treasurer	The Hon. Peter Howard Costello MP
Minister for Trade	The Hon. Warren Errol Truss MP
Minister for Defence	The Hon. Dr Brendan John Nelson MP
Minister for Foreign Affairs	The Hon. Alexander John Gosse Downer MP
Minister for Health and Ageing and Leader of the House	The Hon. Anthony John Abbott MP
Attorney-General	The Hon. Philip Maxwell Ruddock MP
Minister for Finance and Administration, Leader of the Government in the Senate and Vice-President of the Executive Council	Senator the Hon. Nicholas Hugh Minchin
Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry and Deputy Leader of the House	The Hon. Peter John McGauran MP
Minister for Immigration and Multicultural Affairs	Senator the Hon. Amanda Eloise Vanstone
Minister for Education, Science and Training and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Women's Issues	The Hon. Julie Isabel Bishop MP
Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Indigenous Affairs	The Hon. Malcolm Thomas Brough MP
Minister for Industry, Tourism and Resources	The Hon. Ian Elgin Macfarlane MP
Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service	The Hon. Kevin James Andrews MP
Minister for Communications, Information Technology and the Arts and Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate	Senator the Hon. Helen Lloyd Coonan
Minister for the Environment and Heritage	Senator the Hon. Ian Gordon Campbell

(The above ministers constitute the cabinet)

HOWARD MINISTRY—*continued*

Minister for Justice and Customs and Manager of Government Business in the Senate	Senator the Hon. Christopher Martin Ellison
Minister for Fisheries, Forestry and Conservation	Senator the Hon. Eric Abetz
Minister for the Arts and Sport	Senator the Hon. Charles Roderick Kemp
Minister for Human Services and Minister Assisting the Minister for Workplace Relations	The Hon. Joseph Benedict Hockey MP
Minister for Community Services	The Hon. John Kenneth Cobb MP
Minister for Revenue and Assistant Treasurer	The Hon. Peter Craig Dutton MP
Special Minister of State	The Hon. Gary Roy Nairn MP
Minister for Vocational and Technical Education and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister	The Hon. Gary Douglas Hardgrave MP
Minister for Ageing	Senator the Hon. Santo Santoro
Minister for Small Business and Tourism	The Hon. Frances Esther Bailey MP
Minister for Local Government, Territories and Roads	The Hon. James Eric Lloyd MP
Minister for Veterans' Affairs and Minister Assisting the Minister for Defence	The Hon. Bruce Frederick Billson MP
Minister for Workforce Participation	The Hon. Dr Sharman Nancy Stone MP
Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Finance and Administration	Senator the Hon. Richard Mansell Colbeck
Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Industry, Tourism and Resources	The Hon. Robert Charles Baldwin MP
Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Health and Ageing	The Hon. Christopher Maurice Pyne MP
Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Defence	Senator the Hon. John Alexander Lindsay (Sandy) Macdonald
Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Transport and Regional Services	The Hon. De-Anne Margaret Kelly MP
Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Immigration and Multicultural Affairs	The Hon. Andrew John Robb MP
Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister	The Hon. Malcolm Bligh Turnbull MP
Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasurer	The Hon. Christopher John Pearce MP
Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for the Environment and Heritage	The Hon. Gregory Andrew Hunt MP
Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry	The Hon. Sussan Penelope Ley MP
Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Education, Science and Training	The Hon. Patrick Francis Farmer MP
Parliamentary Secretary (Foreign Affairs)	The Hon. Teresa Gambaro MP

SHADOW MINISTRY

Leader of the Opposition	The Hon. Kim Christian Beazley MP
Deputy Leader of the Opposition and Shadow Minister for Education, Training, Science and Research	Jennifer Louise Macklin MP
Leader of the Opposition in the Senate, Shadow Minister for Indigenous Affairs and Shadow Minister for Family and Community Services	Senator Christopher Vaughan Evans
Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Senate and Shadow Minister for Communications and Information Technology	Senator Stephen Michael Conroy
Shadow Minister for Health and Manager of Opposition Business in the House	Julia Eileen Gillard MP
Shadow Treasurer	Wayne Maxwell Swan MP
Shadow Attorney-General	Nicola Louise Roxon MP
Shadow Minister for Industry, Infrastructure and Industrial Relations	Stephen Francis Smith MP
Shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade and Shadow Minister for International Security	Kevin Michael Rudd MP
Shadow Minister for Defence	Robert Bruce McClelland MP
Shadow Minister for Regional Development	The Hon. Simon Findlay Crean MP
Shadow Minister for Primary Industries, Resources, Forestry and Tourism	Martin John Ferguson MP
Shadow Minister for Environment and Heritage, Shadow Minister for Water and Deputy Manager of Opposition Business in the House	Anthony Norman Albanese MP
Shadow Minister for Housing, Shadow Minister for Urban Development and Shadow Minister for Local Government and Territories	Senator Kim John Carr
Shadow Minister for Public Accountability and Shadow Minister for Human Services	Kelvin John Thomson MP
Shadow Minister for Finance	Lindsay James Tanner MP
Shadow Minister for Superannuation and Intergenerational Finance and Shadow Minister for Banking and Financial Services	Senator the Hon. Nicholas John Sherry
Shadow Minister for Child Care, Shadow Minister for Youth and Shadow Minister for Women	Tanya Joan Plibersek MP
Shadow Minister for Employment and Workforce Participation and Shadow Minister for Corporate Governance and Responsibility	Senator Penelope Ying Yen Wong

(The above are shadow cabinet ministers)

SHADOW MINISTRY—*continued*

Shadow Minister for Consumer Affairs and Shadow Minister for Population Health and Health Regulation	Laurie Donald Thomas Ferguson MP
Shadow Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries	Gavan Michael O'Connor MP
Shadow Assistant Treasurer, Shadow Minister for Revenue and Shadow Minister for Small Business and Competition	Joel Andrew Fitzgibbon MP
Shadow Minister for Transport	Senator Kerry Williams Kelso O'Brien
Shadow Minister for Sport and Recreation	Senator Kate Alexandra Lundy
Shadow Minister for Homeland Security and Shadow Minister for Aviation and Transport Security	The Hon. Archibald Ronald Bevis MP
Shadow Minister for Veterans' Affairs and Shadow Special Minister of State	Alan Peter Griffin MP
Shadow Minister for Defence Industry, Procurement and Personnel	Senator Thomas Mark Bishop
Shadow Minister for Immigration	Anthony Stephen Burke MP
Shadow Minister for Ageing, Disabilities and Carers	Senator Jan Elizabeth McLucas
Shadow Minister for Justice and Customs and Manager of Opposition Business in the Senate	Senator Joseph William Ludwig
Shadow Minister for Overseas Aid and Pacific Island Affairs	Robert Charles Grant Sercombe MP
Shadow Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs	Senator Annette Hurley
Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Reconciliation and the Arts	Peter Robert Garrett MP
Shadow Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Opposition	John Paul Murphy MP
Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Defence and Veterans' Affairs	The Hon. Graham John Edwards MP
Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Education	Kirsten Fiona Livermore MP
Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Environment and Heritage	Jennie George MP
Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Industry, Infrastructure and Industrial Relations	Bernard Fernando Ripoll MP
Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Immigration	Ann Kathleen Corcoran MP
Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Treasury	Catherine Fiona King MP
Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Science and Water	Senator Ursula Mary Stephens
Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Northern Australia and Indigenous Affairs	The Hon. Warren Edward Snowdon MP

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MONDAY, 27 NOVEMBER

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Monday, 27 November 2006

The **SPEAKER (Hon. David Hawker)** took the chair at 12.30 pm and read prayers.

DELEGATION REPORTS

Parliamentary Delegation Visit to the 26th AIPO General Assembly, Laos and Bilateral Visit to Pakistan

Mr LINDSAY (Herbert) (12.31 pm)—I present the report of the Parliamentary Delegation to the 26th AIPO General Assembly, Laos and Bilateral Visit to Pakistan—17 to 30 September 2005. I want to thank the members of the delegation—Harry Quick, who is with us in the parliament this afternoon, Senator Ruth Webber, the Hon. Peter Slipper and the secretary of the delegation, David Fitzgerald, who did a mighty job. My colleagues on the delegation were all there in Australia's interest and flying the Australian flag at every opportunity. We learnt a lot. I particularly want to thank our DFAT people in both Laos and Pakistan, who exhibited a high level of professionalism and assistance to the delegation, as well as very significant administrative support. His Excellency Alistair Maclean, in Laos, and Her Excellency Zorica McCarthy, in Pakistan, gave invaluable assistance to the delegation.

The AIPO general assembly was very valuable to Australia, an observer nation at that assembly. The dialogue session, in particular, stood out in my mind in relation to what was discussed. I think more representatives of nations attended our session than attended any other dialogue session. The subjects that were raised were wide-ranging and informative. It gave Australia the opportunity to express its position, and our comments were very well received.

Outside the AIPO meeting, the delegation was able to get briefings on a number of other matters. Two briefings stand out in my mind—firstly, the briefing on the unexploded ordnance issue in Laos. Few people know or understand that there is more unexploded ordnance in Laos than in any other country in the world. The country has been very heavily bombed. In the majority of cases, the ordnance that still exists in the country was sourced not from the United States but from other countries. I am personally involved because my son works in Laos; he is a geologist. When he goes prospecting, he has to have somebody walk in front of him with a metal detector.

The second briefing of particular interest was on the Sepon project, which is run by the Australian mining company Oxiana. Mining is the second largest industry in Laos, after hydroelectricity. Oxiana is a model Australian company in how it relates to the Laotians. On things like technology transfer and helping to preserve the culture, Oxiana is not backward in coming forward. I pay tribute to the managing director of Oxiana, Mr

Owen Hegarty, and his team for how they run the Australian company in Laos.

The delegation was also able to go to Pakistan as part of the bilateral visit. We met with a very significant number of the Pakistani parliament and a range of other people. I think the member for Franklin enjoyed his visit to Lahore and the cricket ground. Our meeting with the President of Pakistan was an outstanding meeting. It was scheduled for half an hour but it ran to 1¼ hours. The President was very interested in the Australian delegation. After 1¼ hours his aides were saying, 'Mr President, you really must go.' It is unusual for a delegation to meet the President, but the President is certainly a great friend of Australia.

I thank those who participated in the delegation. It was certainly in Australia's interests that we were able to represent our country in Laos and Pakistan.

Mr QUICK (Franklin) (12.36 pm)—I would like to endorse the member for Herbert's comments. Pakistan was a real highlight. We had the opportunity to speak to not only the President but also the Prime Minister. We were able to get a very deep understanding of Pakistan's approach to countering Islamic extremism and terrorism. The issue of Kashmir and the dialogue with India was also raised. We visited some provincial parliaments and got an understanding of parliamentary practice in Pakistan. Also, we discussed the bilateral relationship between Pakistan and Australia and met with parliamentarians to talk about a whole lot of political, social and economic issues.

I, like the delegation chair, would like to express my appreciation to Ambassador Alistair Maclean in the Lao PDR and Ambassador Zorica McCarthy in Pakistan. When we were in Laos, two bombs went off in Lahore and some of us were a little bit reluctant to travel to Pakistan. But, having been in this place for many years, the visit to Pakistan was a real highlight. I guess the highlight of highlights was to stand in the Khyber Pass and gaze at Afghanistan across the horizon—to try to understand just how difficult it is for Pakistan and Afghanistan to sort out this whole issue of terrorism. When you look at the mountains of up to 12,000 or 14,000 metres, starting off in the foothills and then going up to the Himalayas past the Hindu Kush, you realise that it is virtually impossible. We visited Peshawar, Islamabad, Rawalpindi and Lahore. We had countless meetings with people and got a wonderful insight into the challenges confronting Pakistan.

Laos was also a privilege to visit. We took a two-hour trip up the Mekong River, in one of the traditional boats, to stop off at a village. As an ex-teacher, I was interested to visit the local primary school and see the appalling conditions that children in Laos experience when it comes to education. I am delighted to say that Australia is doing a wonderful job over there with its aid. The previous speaker, the member for Herbert,

mentioned the work being done on UXO, unexploded ordnances. I take my hat off to the Commonwealth government for the amount of money they are putting into this program and to the dedicated people, from a range of nations, who are working there. Close to 200 people die each year from the million tonnes of unexploded ordnances still lying in the fields in Laos as a result of the Vietnam War.

Another highlight of the trip was a visit to a madrasah. Lots of us have seen television footage of young Muslim youths learning the Koran—nodding their heads and learning it by rote. We challenged one of the people who knows the Koran from the first word to the last. I remember challenging him, and he responded automatically. He knows it off by heart. There is a perception in the West that these are hotbeds of future terrorists. As a teacher, I would like to say this is ridiculous. There might be one or two madrasahs around that are fomenting unrest and providing a haven for future terrorists, but all the others are providing a wonderful service and a wonderful educational opportunity for the young people in Pakistan.

Another highlight was going from Laos to Pakistan via Dubai and seeing the absolute opulence and decadence of Dubai. It is one of the trading hubs of the world. I would like to compliment the other members of the delegation—Peter Slipper and Senator Ruth Webber. As the chairman, the member for Herbert, has said, we worked as a wonderful team, especially at the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Organisation, or AIPO, conference. Like him, I really enjoyed the dialogue sessions where we heard first-hand just how effective Australia's relationship with the ASEAN countries is and how much they appreciate the work that we do. *(Time expired)*

Parliamentary Delegation Visit to Morocco and Algeria and to the 52nd Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference, Nigeria

Mr ENTSCH (Leichhardt) (12.41 pm)—I present the report of the Australian Parliamentary Delegation to Morocco and Algeria and to the 52nd Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference in Nigeria, from 27 August to 9 September 2006. As the leader of the delegation, I am pleased to present this report. The visit to Morocco was the second official visit by an Australian parliamentary delegation to that country, the first occurring in 1993. The visit to Algeria was the first official visit by an Australian parliamentary delegation to Algeria. The visits followed visits last year by members of the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade as part of an inquiry into expanding Australia's trade and investment relationships with North Africa.

In Morocco the delegation had a range of senior meetings in the capital Rabat and also in Casablanca and Tangiers. We had the opportunity to visit the major

new Mediterranean deepwater port development at Oued R'mel, near the Strait of Gibraltar, and to visit a marina project development in Casablanca. We chose to travel by car from Casablanca to the port development in the north to see more of the country and, of course, its infrastructure.

In Algeria we had meetings in Algiers and also visited historical and cultural sites in the country. We were pleased to hear that the security situation in Algeria has improved. Throughout our visit it was evident to us that there is much goodwill towards Australia in both Morocco and Algeria. The visit provided a valuable opportunity to strengthen the relationship between our parliament and the parliaments of Morocco and Algeria. We were also able to gain a better understanding of the bilateral relationship with each of the countries and the issues important to those two countries.

We consider that there are good prospects of enhanced trade and investment relations with the two countries, notwithstanding distance, language and other constraints. In addition to the traditional areas of agribusiness, which apply for both countries, Morocco's growing tourism sector offers many opportunities. In Algeria there are prospects in the construction sector, from the government's major public investment program, as well as opportunities for trade in services. Both countries are moderate Arab countries with an advantage of geostrategic location. It will be important for the Australian government, through the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and Austrade, to continue to provide leadership in facilitating access for Australian companies. The delegation thanks the Moroccan and Algerian parliaments for the warmth of their welcome and for the informative programs they developed for our visit.

The theme of the 52nd Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference in Nigeria was 'Enhancing standards of democratic governance and public perceptions of Parliament in the Commonwealth'. The delegation was pleased to represent the Commonwealth of Australia Branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, the CPA, at the conference, and participated actively in plenary and workshop session discussions. We congratulate the Nigerian parliament for hosting the conference and for its generous hospitality. In our report, we note that the executive committee of the CPA is to consider conference funding issues, and we suggest, in this era of global communication and with active CPA programs at regional levels, that the frequency and duration of conferences be considered.

I would like to thank my fellow delegation member and deputy leader of the delegation the Hon. Simon Crean, the member for Hotham, for his outstanding support and work on the delegation, and Mr Alan Griffin, the member for Bruce, for his participation—and, I might add, for their great company during the visit. On

behalf of the delegation, I would also like to thank all those who assisted with the visit, including officers from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the Parliamentary Library and the Parliamentary Relations Office. Thank you in particular to Ms Tracey Haines and Mr Mark Unwin, who accompanied the delegation in Morocco and Algeria respectively, and to the Australian High Commissioner in Nigeria, His Excellency Mr Iain Dickie, and his staff. Finally, I thank the delegation secretary—and I see her in the chamber here—Ms Robyn McClelland, for her very helpful support. (*Time expired*)

Mr CREAN (Hotham) (12.46 pm)—I join with the member for Leichhardt in his comments, particularly in relation to Robyn McClelland. I think she has done a mighty job in preparing this report, and we thank her for her cooperation. I also thank the other members of the delegation—the member for Leichhardt and the member for Bruce. It was not just a rewarding trip; it was good company as well. People outside this place often see us brawling, but we actually do a lot together when we are given the opportunity.

This was my first bilateral delegation visit in the almost 17 years that I have been in this parliament. Interestingly enough, it is also my first attendance at a Commonwealth Parliamentary Association conference. I want to make a couple of broad observations. First, I believe it is important that we develop and foster parliament-to-parliament relationships. I have been involved in many government-to-government and opposition-to-government dialogues, but I think it is fundamental that we as a parliament engage other parliaments. The bedrock of any vibrant democracy is its ability to ensure that the parliamentary process provides for accountability, transparency and representation. I think we have to learn more effectively of the progress, and indeed the shortcomings, of various countries in how they are dealing with this issue.

I also think the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association must play a role in promoting better mechanisms for greater accountability, transparency and governance, particularly within developing nations. We hear much about the ‘aid or trade’ argument. I say it has to be about helping developing countries, but, if we do not tackle the corruption in those countries, whatever is done in aid and trade is dissipated. Strengthening parliamentary institutions is an important mechanism for tackling this corruption, and I hope that, in the review of the funding of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association—which the member for Leichhardt has referred to—more emphasis is given to the role of training and support for these institutions.

On the bilateral front, Morocco and Algeria provide important opportunities on the trade, regional security and antiterrorism fronts. Both countries are pluralist parliamentary democracies, but they are having to deal

with militant Islamism. Morocco, for example, experienced terrorist bombings in Casablanca in May 2003, and there were Moroccan links to the Madrid train bombings. Algeria pointedly rejected the phrase ‘the war against terrorism’, noting they had fought against terrorism for decades. I think we have to be sensitive to language issues here as well.

Both countries have made significant efforts with real progress—a point which was acknowledged by BHP Billiton in Algeria. Their efforts involve not only strong counter-insurgency and intelligence gathering but also significant social and economic reforms to alleviate poverty and the lack of education. I think that Australia, through a stronger political presence in the region, should not only encourage both countries to settle their differences but urge both of them to promote a strong regional response against terrorism—and, for that matter, illegal immigration, which is also a matter of concern to both of them.

On the trade front: strategically, both countries need to be looked at from the perspective of trade potential, not just the levels of trade we are experiencing at the moment. Both of them have FTAs with the EU, and that can provide an important gateway for Australia, not just for bilateral trade but for trade with the rest of Africa and the rest of Europe. We as a delegation believe that serious consideration should be given to our organisation and representation in the area. It is important not only for trade but also for geopolitical issues and the significance of both these countries addressing those issues. I thank the parliament for the opportunity to have participated in this delegation.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Rural and Regional Australia: Employment Conditions

Mr BRENDAN O'CONNOR (Gorton) (12.52 pm)—I move:

That the House:

- (1) recognises the enormous hurt to Australian working men and women owing to the enactment of the Work Choices legislation;
- (2) recognises the extraordinary contribution of Australian rural and regional workers to their communities and the national economy;
- (3) recognises the particular damage to employment conditions and employment prospects in rural and regional Australia;
- (4) takes immediate action to restore protection for employment conditions and employment prospects in rural and regional Australia; and
- (5) takes note of the Howard Government's agenda to remove employment conditions and employment security, particularly in regional and rural Australia.

Last Saturday, Victorians voted in large numbers for the return of the Bracks government and, although the reasons for the re-election of the Labor government are

many and varied, there is no doubt that one of the reasons was a resounding rejection of the Howard government's Work Choices legislation. Interestingly, Labor continues to enjoy extraordinary support in regional Victoria. In fact, Labor maintained dominance in regional Victoria, while the Liberal Party went backwards. Only The Nationals, by walking away from the extreme and unfair IR laws, made any gains whatsoever for the conservatives in my state.

The fact is that, however unpopular such laws are across the nation, Work Choices legislation is really on the nose in rural and regional Australia—and for good reason. Labor's IR task force has this year been to many towns and regional areas, including Launceston, Rockhampton, Gladstone, Townsville and others, which I am sure will be mentioned in the debate today. From the meetings we have held in those regions, I can conclude that there is a high degree of anxiety about the way in which the Commonwealth has chosen to enact legislation on regulating workplaces across the country.

Last month the task force visited Devonport, in north-west Tasmania, and spoke to Phil Upton and his wife about the severe cut to his wage after his employer was bought out by another company. In effect, Phil was forced to sign an agreement that stripped him of all penalty rates and overtime provisions, which led to a cut of almost \$200 in his gross weekly income. This obscene wage cut has forced him to find other work and, indeed, he is now employed on a casual basis in north-west Tasmania.

In Bundaberg last week, Labor's IR task force met with a number of church leaders, small businesses and rural workers. One such worker was David Bunyoung, who was sacked without cause. At the end of his shift in August this year, this man received a letter which indicated that, for operational reasons, he was no longer employed. He had received no prior warning, but he suspects that he was sacked because he was injured for two weeks in May and claimed on WorkCover for that period. David estimates that, in the nine years he worked for his employer, he took no more than seven days off. Indeed, until he was sacked in August this year, in 42 years of work he had never been counselled regarding his employment. This could not have happened, and would not have happened, if Work Choices legislation was not in force in this country.

The task force was also provided with a copy of a non-union collective agreement which regulates fruit pickers and vegetable pickers in the region—the Hinkler Park Plantation Horticultural Employees Collective Agreement—which has been certified and filed by the Employment Advocate. This agreement has fundamentally reduced the award conditions that regulate employment in that industry. It has extended the 40-hour week to a 42½-hour week and it has removed all

penalty rates for public holidays. It forces employees to work public holidays if the employer so wishes, and it will pay them only a day off in lieu. In other words, they are required to work Christmas Day if the employer says so. Indeed, they will only receive a single rate of pay if they are forced to work those conditions. The penalty rates have gone, the overtime entitlements have gone and there is now a \$2 per hour payment for weekend work, which is about 80 per cent less than the award conditions that had applied to those employees.

As we go throughout the country, particularly in regional and rural Australia, we are seeing that this legislation is hurting ordinary working families. There are fewer employment prospects in many of these country towns. Indeed, they are very badly affected—and when people are sacked, in the way in which David was sacked in Bundaberg, they do not know how to explain it to their family or the community. It is an abject shame that the government has enacted this legislation. *(Time expired)*

The SPEAKER—Is the motion seconded?

Mrs Elliot—I second the motion and reserve my right to speak.

Mr SLIPPER (Fisher) (12.57 pm)—As a person who ran a small business prior to being elected to the parliament—I ran a legal firm and employed many people—I have to say that good employees are valued employees. My experience as an employer—and it is also the experience of my constituents who talk to me about these matters and have made it clear to me—is that, when an employee is a worthwhile productive employee, employers will go out of their way to ensure that that employee remains on the payroll. The last thing a business wants is instability and to lose valued employees who have corporate knowledge. I cannot support the member for Gorton's motion because I think the Work Choices legislation is a very positive initiative for Australian working men and women, as well as a positive initiative from the point of view of the Australian economy.

It is tremendous to see that there has been significant job growth in Australia since the introduction of the Work Choices legislation. Our unemployment rate has dropped to the lowest level in over 30 years. I am proud to be part of a party that supports a government that has not only done an outstanding job in managing the economy during a decade in office but also shown the conviction and strength of character to look beyond the barrage of hollow criticisms about these new laws—from the ACTU and members opposite—and go ahead and introduce what has proven to be and will continue to be a valuable and economically sound new industrial relations system.

I mentioned in the House last year that the government will not apologise for Work Choices—and, as the positive results continue to flow in, that clearly remains

the case. It is regrettable that those opposite have waged a publicity battle against this important legislation, which has helped to create a climate of fear and uncertainty amongst the very people the union movement and the Labor Party claim to support: workers and their families.

As radio broadcaster Alan Jones noted several months ago in his talkback show on 11 August, the union movement has claimed that Work Choices will all but lead to the end of the world. What a ridiculous statement! It is unforgivable that the campaign against Work Choices so blatantly plays on the ambitions and hopes of workers, using them as pawns in a politically-motivated campaign to smear a workable and successful new system. As Mr Jones so cleverly articulated: is the ALP genuinely concerned about the worker and the truth or is it just using the worker to score a few political points?

The campaign is running out of steam and the labour movement seems to be getting worried. Some 205,000 new jobs have been created since the Work Choices system came into play, with the greater proportion of them—some 184,000—being full-time positions.

The coalition government's dedication to ensuring that rural workers are able to find jobs has been further demonstrated by a program that saw some 14 job seekers from Coffs Harbour being flown to Western Australia to go straight into jobs in the construction industry. It is a program that matches unemployed people living in areas with few jobs to positions in areas that are looking for workers.

In addition, wages have grown significantly since 1996 under the coalition's leadership—in fact, by more than 16 per cent, compared to a paltry 0.3 per cent growth over the 16 years of Labor government between 1983 and 1996—and have continued to grow since the introduction of Work Choices.

The evidence in support of Work Choices mounts up. We have seen the TV and print advertisements that were designed to shoot holes in Work Choices by showing us supposedly real people facing real risks due to the new laws. These people and their situations were all investigated by the Office of Workplace Services, which found they were all dodgy. In one of the ads, an abattoir worker claimed he was being sacked due to Work Choices. However, the investigation revealed that the abattoir was doing it tough financially and was forced to make the tough decision to avoid going under. Work Choices had nothing to do with it. I have lots of other instances but, regrettably, time is short.

Work Choices has proven to be a major headache for the opposition. They claimed it would rob Australian workers, but, to the contrary, it has in fact delivered job growth and continued wages growth. Work Choices is making Australian families better off. Labor claimed it

would bring a wave of job losses, but the only examples brought forward were found to be bogus. Work Choices has been a good thing for Australia and will continue to be so in the future. (*Time expired*)

Mrs ELLIOT (Richmond) (1.02 pm)—I rise to support this motion and the member for Gorton's comments on the very severe impacts of the Howard government's extreme industrial relations laws on people in rural and regional Australia. How interesting and bamboozling it has been to listen to the comments made by the member for Fisher! He shows how out of touch and arrogant this government has become. When you speak to people on the ground and hear their concerns firsthand, ordinary everyday Australians are saying how concerned they are about the extreme impacts of this government's Work Choices legislation. The member for Fisher certainly shows how out of touch the government has become.

Throughout the nation, we are seeing families hurting from this extreme Work Choices legislation. In particular, those in rural and regional areas are really feeling it and doing it tough. We already have families under much pressure, with increasing interest rates and the cost of living rising all the time. And now, of course, the Work Choices legislation is impacting very severely on families.

The member for Gorton spoke before about federal Labor's industrial relations task force. Earlier in the year, the task force visited Richmond and we had a forum to which many locals came along. They spoke about their concerns and their situations and were able to tell us firsthand about how their working conditions had been taken away, about how their wages had been slashed, about how they had lost their penalty rates and about how scared they were for the future of their families. This is what the task force heard. I continue to hear from locals every single day about how they are being impacted right across all the different industries and how terrified they are about their working conditions and the future.

One point that is very pertinent to rural and regional areas is that people are afraid of speaking out. When they approach me about it, they are terrified to speak to the media about it. They are terrified to make their conditions and their concerns known more widely. It is different in regional and rural areas. If you are in a big city you might be able to go to the other side of town to look for work, but if you are in a regional area and have spoken up about how severely you have been treated, everyone is going to know and everyone is going to talk about it. That makes it very hard for people in regional areas.

It is just part of the intimidatory nature of this legislation that it keeps people from speaking out at all and just adds to their fear about the whole situation. It certainly adds to the distress they are already feeling when

they are just too scared to speak out. I commend those who have so bravely spoken out, particularly those in my electorate who have spoken about how their conditions have been taken away.

In rural and regional areas we also have teenage unemployment. In my electorate of Richmond, 30 per cent of teenagers, or almost one in three, are unemployed—a huge amount. When these young people are trying to get jobs, when they look at the unfair working conditions they could be facing, it is very difficult for them. How can they negotiate with a large multinational employer? How are they able to do that? It is an unbalanced relationship. They have no power in those situations. The same applies to many other people across the community. But, with those high rates of teenage unemployment, it is particularly difficult for young people, desperately struggling as they are, to get into the workforce.

Many small business owners have also told me how adversely affected they have been. If a business down the road is paying less in wages, how can they compete? Where is the even playing field? A lot of small business owners have told me how severely this has impacted on the way they carry out their business—and often small business owners are the backbone of regional areas.

There is a huge proportion of elderly people in my electorate—and often they are the people who fought very hard to get decent working conditions. Many of them are really concerned about the working conditions for their children and grandchildren in the future.

Another major aspect for regional areas is the effect that the Work Choices legislation will have on tourism. Tourism is one of the major businesses in my electorate of Richmond. It really is the backbone of the community. If people across Australia are forced to trade away a lot of their leave, what will happen to areas that rely on tourism? Of course, the numbers will go down and we will not have as many people travelling to those areas. That in turn will impact on the number of jobs in the area and affect the whole local community.

A lot of tourism operators have told me how concerned they are as we see the full effects of these extreme industrial relations laws. The reality is that the only way to get rid of these extreme laws is to get rid of the Howard government, because only a federal Labor government will restore fairness and equity in the workplace.

This Thursday is a national day of action. We are going to be seeing hundreds of thousands of people across Australia standing up to the Howard government's extreme legislation. I know that in regional and rural areas we will be seeing thousands of people as well. I commend all those who will be attending those rallies. *(Time expired)*

Mr BARRESI (Deakin) (1.07 pm)—I am pleased to be able to make a contribution to the debate on this motion on employment moved by the member for Gorton. One aspect of the motion that I do agree with is:

(2) recognises the extraordinary contribution of Australian rural and regional workers to their communities and the national economy.

We all recognise that, and that is the only point in the entire motion on which I concur with the honourable member for Gorton.

The member for Gorton introduced his motion by saying that the state election on Saturday in Victoria was an indication of the Victorian public's repudiation of the industrial relations laws of this government. One thing is for sure: this week, because of their national day of action, there will be motion after motion and claim after claim which will be made regarding Work Choices and a willingness, suddenly, to lay at the feet of the federal government all that has happened in Victoria. I pose the question to the member for Gorton: is the repudiation of the industrial relations legislation reflected in the four per cent to six per cent swing against the Labor Party in the eastern suburbs of Melbourne? The eastern suburbs of Melbourne were heavily targeted by the Labor Party and the swing there was four per cent to six per cent against them. Contrary to what has been said, Work Choices has worked.

I have visited regional and rural Australia, as has the member for Gorton. Perhaps we were not speaking to the same groups or the same people, because the story I get is quite the opposite. Since March 2006, when Work Choices came in, we have seen a record number of jobs. Jobs create prosperity; jobs create an opportunity for families to get on. Jobs create these things—not unions. A union cannot guarantee a person a job and a government cannot guarantee a person a job and prosperity. What can of course are economic conditions. The Howard government has created the economic conditions necessary for prosperity and for jobs growth. Since March this year we have seen over 205,000 jobs created, providing an opportunity for a lot of people, often for the first time, to have an income and provide for their families.

Contrast that with the Labor Party's record when there was high regulation. There was strong industrial relations regulation during the eighties and the nineties. When the member for Brand, the Leader of the Opposition, was Minister for Employment, Education and Training, the unemployment rate peaked at 10.9 per cent, with over one million Australians out of work. That was in an environment of high regulation. What have we seen since March 2006? We have seen extraordinary levels of employment growth, with over 205,000 new jobs being created.

In some of the regional towns that I have been to, and others that we know of, we have seen the growth

take place. For example, the unemployment rate in the electorate of Capricornia—Rockhampton, which the member for Gorton apparently visited—was 10.1 per cent in June 2006; today it is four per cent. Therefore, we are seeing jobs growth taking place. Another example is the New South Wales electorate of Charlton. In 1996, the unemployment rate in the electorate of Charlton was 11.2 per cent. In June 2006, the unemployment rate was 5.4 per cent. In 1996, 44 electorates had double-digit unemployment rates and many of these electorates covered the rural and regional areas of Australia. In June 2006, not one electorate had double-digit unemployment. Can I also say—

Mr Brendan O'Connor—You can say what you like.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. IR Causley)—The member for Gorton will be missing question time if he is not careful.

Mr BARRESI—Can I ask the member for Gorton at least to acknowledge that what this government has done has helped to drive unemployment down and therefore create real jobs growth to take place. You do not have to listen to what we have to say about this. The National Farmers Federation, very recently after the High Court decision, rejected claims by Labor's shadow minister for regional development, Simon Crean, that Work Choices had had a detrimental impact on regional Australia. Work Choices, as the NFF has said, has provided the flexibility and a focus on productivity gains that regional communities have sought for many years, and we are seeing that with the growth taking place. The member for Richmond, who is no longer present in the House, mentioned that people would be sacked and that they did not have another job to go to. The member for Gorton and I at the moment are travelling around Australia looking at that employment growth, and we know that every time someone is dismissed it is a cost to the business. (*Time expired*)

Ms BIRD (Cunningham) (1.12 pm)—I rise to support the motion of the member for Gorton which is before us today. I want to deal to some extent with some of the arguments that have been raised on the other side of the House. In particular, the member for Fisher ran the argument that employers tell him that if they have a good employee they will of course not sack them. What else would you expect an employer to say to you? They are not going to say, 'Even if I have a good employee I will sack them.' The reality is that 90 per cent of employers out there want to look after and do the right thing by their staff. None of us would argue differently. We on this side of the House are concerned about those who are vulnerable to abuse, and there will always be abuse in whatever system. Whether it is industrial relations, health, education—whatever you want to talk about—there is a capacity for people to be abused. For me, and for others on this

side of the House, the role of government should be to ensure that in those circumstances people have some sort of protection. Our problem with this legislation is that it takes away all of those protections from that percentage of the population who are particularly vulnerable.

The legislation is called Work Choices. Let us talk about what choice relies on. Choice relies on having the capacity to decide between alternatives. We met many people in rural and regional Australia as we travelled around with the task force, and I cannot tell you the number of times we had to meet people in camera because they did not dare talk about their circumstances publicly. What sort of a country are we living in where people in rural and regional areas are too intimidated to say publicly what has happened to them and why they are concerned?

The government argues there has been a massive growth in jobs. Let us not get into how jobs were defined 10 years ago and how they are defined now. The community are not fooled. In my region of the Illawarra and in the electorates along the south-eastern coastline, unemployment still runs at over 10 per cent—double the national average. The member for Richmond mentioned teenage unemployment. In my electorate teenage unemployment, according to the latest figures, is 43 per cent. That is not kids in school but kids who are in neither education nor employment but are registered as looking for work. We are creating a pool of young people with limited skills and education to enable them to make decisions between jobs. They have very little experience.

I hear the stories of these young people all the time—not so much from the young people, but from their parents. The parents, who know that it is wrong, ring in. The young person is put on by an employer. A classic example is: 'We think we might have an apprenticeship or a traineeship. Why don't you come in and do a couple of weeks free work experience? We will give you a try for a month and, if you work out, we will give you a traineeship or an apprenticeship.' The young person goes in and does the work, and suddenly they are told, 'You are not suitable,' or 'We are no longer employing in that position.' Funnily enough, a big influx of those sorts of complaints has occurred in the last few weeks. Why would that be? It is because Christmas is coming up and it is nice to have a few cheap extra staff over the Christmas period.

For those people who are most vulnerable to exploitation, laws and legislation should provide some protection. This legislation—the supposed 'Work Choices' legislation—does not do that. If you are living in rural or regional Australia, the impacts are far more significant for you. There is probably only one local newspaper or maybe a radio station—let's not start on the communications legislation—and, if your story is in

that newspaper or on that radio station, you fear that every employer will know you complained and therefore no-one will give you a go and you will be stuck. You will not be able to get employment in your local area. Those are the problems we face.

The member for Richmond mentioned tourism. Tourism is a big sleeper in this legislation. I would be interested to hear the other side start to address it. Our task force went to Nowra and heard from several tourism organisations based there that are very worried by the fact that Australians already have a pretty appalling rate of taking their holiday leave. When I grew up, you had your couple of weeks off at Christmas. You packed the tent in the car and off you went to the coast somewhere. People are not taking their leave and travelling as it is. When they are encouraged by this legislation to feel that they need to work over the holiday periods—‘You don’t need to take holidays; cash out the leave’—we will see a real impact on tourism in our regions. *(Time expired)*

Mrs HULL (Riverina) (1.17 pm)—I rise today, in this debate on the private member’s motion on the Work Choices legislation, to speak on behalf of the employers, not only in the Riverina but right across Australia. Currently in the Riverina we are facing the worst drought we have ever faced. Business is in decline. My issue is that employers are keeping the staff on. To keep their staff on they are using up their resources from their good times—meaning from when their businesses made a profit. Profit can be a dirty word in the eyes of many in the opposition.

We hear in the House today about rural families doing it tough. That is exactly correct, but of the many people who are doing it tough most are employers in rural and regional Australia. I do not think anyone in the Riverina could deny that the majority of employers have a good relationship with their employees and that these business owners-operators value their employees’ service. Most of my Riverina businesses consistently put their employees’ needs high on their personal agenda as they currently stand with this encroaching devastating drought. That is simply because they know that their business is reliant on good staff, and they certainly do not want to lose good staff, even if they have to utilise their own resources in the times when the money is not coming through their front doors.

On the reverse side, most employees in my electorate of Riverina recognise that they would not have a job if it were not for the personal commitment of their employers. Most of the employees are very appreciative of that fact—not that you would hear that from opposition members. Employers deserve a fair go in this debate on the Work Choices industrial relations changes. I do not think they have had a fair go since the introduction of Work Choices. Most employers have done nothing wrong—they may never do any-

thing wrong—but they are maligned and defamed every day in the media and in this House. Most employers work hard right alongside their employees. They put their homes—their assets—on the line every day to meet the running costs of their businesses. The running costs of a business include the employees’ wages and conditions, including superannuation, and costs for a whole host of training and personal development. There is little or no recognition of this in the debates and propaganda that we witness on a day-to-day basis in the news on industrial relations.

I am embarrassed for employers. They deserve some consideration in this debate, but they get very little, except when something pops up out of the blue and then all employers have the same stone cast against them. What if that were to happen to employees? Of course you will get a bad employer, but for every bad employer you will get an equally bad employee. How do employees feel when they are all cast as the same sort of—bad—employee? They are certainly not all the same. In my electorate employment opportunities with local firms have been presented to people. It is time for us to recognise the value of both the business owner-operator—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. IR Causley)—Order! The time allotted for this debate has expired. The debate is adjourned and the resumption of the debate will be made an order of the day for the next sitting.

Iraq

Mr JOHNSON (Ryan) (1.22 pm)—I move:

That the House supports the Australian Government’s policy of:

- (1) remaining unequivocally committed to the Iraqi people’s aspirations to be a democratic and free society, with the continuing presence of Australian Defence Force personnel; and
- (2) standing completely resolute against non-state actors determined to commit (directly or indirectly) acts of terror and violence against free peoples and free societies.

It is common language today that 11 September 2001 changed the world in a way that few could have imagined on that day when two civilian aircraft flew into the World Trade Centre towers in New York and another aircraft crashed into the Pentagon. It was on that day that yet another aircraft crashed in Stony Creek township, Pennsylvania, killing hundreds of innocent passengers. It was on that flight, we understand, that the passengers signed their names into the books of courage in their country with their amazing attempt to overpower the hijackers and prevent potential catastrophic loss of life. So, on 11 September, the world mourned the loss of thousands of innocent lives in the United States—2,996, to be precise.

Since September 11, we have witnessed several other terrorists acts, killing more innocent people, from

Bali to Madrid to London. This begs the question: what is it that drives men to commit such heinous acts of terror on their fellow mankind? The British Prime Minister expressed his thoughts very eloquently both in this parliament and elsewhere—the battlefronts in the Middle East. We in this country cannot fully understand it—perhaps we never will. One thing we can ask is whether we should accept this as part of the moral norms of our times, as part of evolution in the post-Cold War world or merely as part of the geopolitics of the 21st century. The Howard government says without hesitation and equivocation, ‘No, we should not accept this as acceptable international behaviour in the 21st century.’ Terror and terrorists have no place in the 21st century.

Since September 2001, Australia has been fighting the war against terror and, since 2003, this has involved a direct military commitment in Iraq. Many still debate the original decision to go to Iraq. The opposition has accused this government and this Prime Minister of being poll driven. The decision to go to Iraq was extremely unpopular. It was the least poll-driven decision that any government could have taken. Labor fails to understand this most elementary point—that governments govern in the national interest; they do not make decisions simply because they are popular.

Where no-one contested the evil nature of the Saddam Hussein regime—a regime that sanctioned mass murder, mass torture and mass rape—there is simply no contest on the fact that without the coalition of the willing invading Iraq, Saddam Hussein would still be there today. That is beyond question. There has been much talk about the coalition of the willing withdrawing from Iraq. To my mind, this is simply not an option. To the mind of the Australian government, this is simply not an option.

The Leader of the Opposition and the Labor Party are now advocating the unconditional withdrawal from Iraq of coalition forces. I reject that notion absolutely. It is a manifestly irresponsible policy call by the federal opposition. The immediate withdrawal of our 1,200 troops would send the wrong signal to all the stakeholders in this war against terror and indiscriminate violence. It would leave us guilty to the charge of weakness, cowardice and political opportunism at a time when we need to demonstrate all the qualities that make the Australian nation respected internationally. We need to demonstrate our courage, our strength and our fortitude. We need to demonstrate that all the good work that Australian troops have achieved in the last three years would not be wasted and that a vacuum would not be created or replaced by other forces of extremism and violence.

The most significant achievement is of course the fact that, despite the brutal threats from insurgents in Iraq, millions and millions of Iraqis have turned out in

three nationwide elections since the war began and voted overwhelmingly in favour of democracy. Twelve million Iraqis turned out in the most recent election when Prime Minister al-Maliki was elected. For the record, in Australia, there were 13.1 million voters as of 31 October, 2006. The Iraqi people should be an inspiration to all of us in this country. How can they not be an inspiration to us in this country, where we take so many things for granted. But, if the United States and the coalition forces were to withdraw, terrorists worldwide would receive a huge morale and propaganda boost from such a withdrawal. It would embolden terrorists across the world, including in our own region. We must remember that Australians are a critical part of the coalition presence in Iraq. (*Time expired*)

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. IR Causley)—Is the motion seconded?

Mr Wood—I second the motion and reserve my right to speak.

Mr EDWARDS (Cowan) (1.27 pm)—The motion moved today by the member for Ryan shows just how arrogant this government has become. This motion calls for an open chequebook approach to the lives of Australian soldiers deployed to Iraq. This motion confirms that the Howard government will defend its ill-considered political position on Iraq to the last American soldier or the last Iraqi civilian. Given the way this civil war is raging, it is evident that it will indeed be the Iraqi civilians who will continue to pay the ultimate price of Sunni versus Shiah and Shiah versus Sunni and our forces getting caught in the bloody middle. According to a recent report by the United States Department of Defense, this horror, this bloodshed and this payback is occurring on a daily basis in an environment where some Iraqi politicians are condoning or maintaining support for violent means as a source of political leverage with an increasing number of death squads, including those formed from ‘rogue elements of the Iraq security forces’, where unprofessional and criminal behaviour is being attributed to certain units in the national police and where corruption, illegal activity and sectarian bias have obtained progress in developing security forces.

This motion today calls on us to continue to support this corruption and this sanctioned violence. Compare the stupidity of the words of this government motion, which claims that all is well in Iraq, with the wisdom, strength and courage of what was said by former SAS officer Peter Tinley just two days ago. On the weekend he called for the immediate withdrawal of Australian forces from Iraq. He said that Iraq was a moral blunder and he condemned the Howard government for its handling of the war, yet here today we have a government motion which is full of self-congratulation and incredible stupidity. Major Tinley said on the weekend:

It was a cynical use of the Australian Defence Force by the Government. This war duped the Australian Defence Force and the Australian people in terms of thinking it was in some way legitimate.

Major Tinley did not sit in the safety of Parliament House in Canberra urging some other Australian to go and fight in a dirty, stinking, filthy war; he went where his government sent him, and during his military service at the sharp end he was decorated for his courage.

We are asked today from the safety and comfort of Parliament House to support this jackass motion put before us by the member for Ryan. We can do that or we can choose to listen to someone with the first-hand experience of Peter Tinley, who has immediate and intimate knowledge of how this war is being waged and who has 25 years of military service upon which to base his views. As a veteran, I choose to listen to and to support what Major Tinley advocates, and that is an immediate withdrawal of our troops from Iraq.

The Australian people have indeed been duped over this war in Iraq. Our troops were sent there to find weapons of mass destruction which we were told existed but were never found and which many credible intelligence experts believe never existed. We were then told it was about regime change—it was about getting rid of Saddam. I have no problem with that, but if that is why we went there why were we not told that at the time and why did the government send inadequate force numbers for that task and the subsequent occupation? No wonder the Governor-General came out and criticised them just the other day.

We were then told it was a strike against terrorism, that our troops would be there for weeks and that it would be a short deployment. Then the troops were told they would be there until the job was done. They did the job in Al Muthanna, but did they bring them home? No, contrary to the promise to bring them home, they were redeployed. They are now seen to be an occupying force and are in the middle of a bloody, vengeful and unrelenting civil war, and the members opposite say, 'Leave them there indefinitely.'

I congratulate Peter Tinley for his courage in speaking out. He is indeed a courageous Australian. I have no doubt that many other senior military leaders share his views, as do many ordinary mums and dads in the community, particularly those with sons and daughters involved in Iraq, sons and daughters about whom this government says, 'Leave them there indefinitely.'

Mr WOOD (La Trobe) (1.32 pm)—I rise today in support of the motion moved by the member for Ryan. I will start with a long-used quote: 'All that is necessary for evil to triumph is for good men to do nothing.' That is why, as a government, you need to make the tough decisions and the right decisions. Sometimes the public may not be behind you but you still have to do what is right for your country and the world.

Prior to participating in the war that toppled Saddam Hussein's regime in 2003, the Australian government made a commitment to do everything in its power to encourage the establishment of a representative government in post-war Iraq. As the end of 2006 draws near, we do not resile from this commitment. Unlike those on the other side of this chamber, I believe it is crucial that the Australian government remains unequivocally committed to the aspirations of the Iraqi people to a democratic and free society. What more would any country want?

On three occasions in 2005—in March, in October and again in December—Iraqis endured the most fearful intimidation to come out in their millions, even in the insurgent strongholds, to vote in favour of a democratic future. What is more fair, reasonable and right? Saddam Hussein, whose regime was responsible for the deaths of hundreds of thousands of Iraqis, has now been tried and sentenced by his own people. His sons were butchers. They would systematically go out and rape women. If you were an Iraqi parent, you did not want your daughter to be in the Iraqi Olympic team. Why? Because they would have been sexually abused. This is the type of government Saddam Hussein had, and this is why it was so crucial that he be toppled.

These events represent to the world the shining emblem of the Iraqi people's determination to move forward towards democracy, but Labor seems opposed to this. In this place on 19 October this year the Leader of the Opposition said of Labor's alternative strategy for Australia's future in Iraq that it involves three elements. The first is the unilateral withdrawal of Australian troops. I ask you: 'Then what happens?' The second is to provide Iraqis with aid and training. I totally concur with that and we have been doing that. The third is to put Australian troops in the region and our resources into practical measures. I would say we are doing that too.

In essence, Labor's policy is nothing more than to unilaterally pull out Australian troops and hope for the best. But why? The Leader of the Opposition argues that coalition troops are a magnet for jihadists around the world who are destabilising Iraq and for causing disputes between the Shiite and Sunni communities. He may be correct, but that does not mean that it is in Australia's best interests or in the world's best interests to withdraw. It is significant that in presenting Labor's policy the Leader of the Opposition is careful to avoid the question of what effect an Australian withdrawal would have on the morale of the terrorists within Iraq and, more importantly, around the world. Moreover, the Leader of the Opposition says nothing about what effect an Australian withdrawal would have on the United States and on other Western liberal democracies with whom Australia has so far stood shoulder to

shoulder against terrorism. Labor has simply chosen to ignore these pivotal questions.

The Leader of the Opposition also believes that Australia should withdraw its troops because the coalition leadership in Iraq is a security blanket for the Iraqi civilian leadership. To advocate a unilateral withdrawal, paying no heed to whether the Iraqi civilian leadership is capable of managing without coalition support, is incredibly reckless and ill considered. Adopting Labor's strategy would make Australia a mere proxy of our enemies. It would give great heart to the non-state actors from every corner of the globe, from Jerusalem to Jakarta, to recruit and strike Western interests.

Australia is a country that honours its commitments. No Australian government should unilaterally leave its allies to finish a job that they began together in good faith, especially when the basis for doing so is as precarious as that upon which the Labor Party's policy rests. For those reasons I support the government's position on Iraq, and I commend the member for Ryan's motion to this House. I have heard the opposition members' contributions, and I fully concur that our Australian troops are doing a fantastic job under trying circumstances. I congratulate our troops for their service to this country in the war against terrorism. (*Time expired*)

Mr DANBY (Melbourne Ports) (1.37 pm)—The member for Ryan's motion comes in two parts. The opposition completely agrees with the second part of his motion—'That the House stands resolute against those who commit acts of terror and violence'—as, I am sure, every member of this House does. We on this side of the House have given consistent support to this government's antiterrorism legislation, although we have raised concerns about some provisions of these bills when we thought it appropriate. There is a bipartisan consensus in this parliament on the need to combat terrorism. The second part of the honourable member's motion does no more than reflect that.

The first part of the honourable member for Ryan's motion is a different matter. It appears that he does not know that his motion has been overtaken by events in Iraq and in the United States. There has been a mid-term election in the United States, Member for Ryan, which can only be seen as a repudiation by the American electorate of the American policy in Iraq. That verdict has been confirmed by the resignations of Secretary Rumsfeld, the architect of that policy, and by no less a person than Senator Warner, a Republican chairman of the joint foreign affairs committee over there—something you should get on board with.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. IR Causley)—The member for Melbourne Ports will address his remarks through the chair.

Mr DANBY—While I believe the US went into Iraq with good intentions and while the overthrow of

Saddam Hussein's murderous regime was certainly welcomed—as were his trial and ultimate sentence—it is obvious that the strategy of trying to turn Iraq into a Western style democracy, and using Iraq as a role model for the rest of the Middle East, has not succeeded. Iraq is a society deeply divided along ethnic and religious lines. The tactics of the Iraqi insurgents, pitting Shia against Sunni and Kurd against Arab, have unfortunately been all too successful. The members for Ryan and La Trobe should understand that there has been a dramatic turn in American foreign policy—you do not want to be here preaching for the war in Iraq after the American Republican administration has already turned.

I do not pretend to know how the situation in Iraq will play out. Possibly a de facto partition into Shia, Sunni and Kurdish states along the lines of the settlement in Bosnia under the Dayton Accord is the best option available, but that is a matter for the Iraqi people to determine. Although Mr Baker's Iraqi study group may recommend a temporary upscaling in deployment of American forces, there will be a phased withdrawal of United States forces. The Australian Labor Party's attitudes are not a reflection on the competence or courage of the ADF, who have always carried out their tasks with great efficiency and skill but a reflection on the political wisdom of the events that sent them to Iraq.

I will quote Senator Chuck Hagel, a Republican and Bush loyalist, from yesterday's *Washington Post*. I say through the Deputy Speaker that you guys should be reading this. Senator Hagel said:

There will be no military victory or military solution for Iraq. The US and its allies cannot police Iraq indefinitely and cannot force the Iraqis to stay in a united Iraqi state if that is not what they want. Our role now should be confined to protecting our embassy, training Iraqi personnel and defending Iraq's offshore oil assets, as they have asked us to, and to helping to train Iraq's own defence forces.

The most regrettable aspect of the Iraq operation has been that it has made it much more difficult for the United States and its allies to respond effectively to the challenges of North Korea and Iran. It is striking that, of the three states of President Bush's 'axis of evil', Iraq was the only one that did not have weapons of mass destruction. What is now clear is that North Korea has nuclear weapons and that Iran is determined to get them as soon as possible. The political credibility of the Western alliance is so low that no effective response can be made to either of these challenges. This is a very dangerous situation. If we are to believe President Ahmedinejad, the theocratic regime in Tehran has every intention of using its nuclear weapons to destroy Israel and to hasten the coming of the Hidden Imam, the Shiite messiah—a completely irrational

approach to politics but something that people in the world have to adjust to.

Those such as the member for Ryan need to reflect on the position that we have got ourselves into. There is a fratricidal civil war in Iraq, which we are unable to stop. We have greatly weakened the political credit of the Western alliance, and we have allowed North Korea and Iran to press ahead with the development of weapons of mass destruction. We have also allowed the situation in Afghanistan to deteriorate. I do not think that this is much of a record to boast about.

I will conclude by saying that some of the statements of the President of Iran are truly frightening. The foreign minister of Iran has also said some things that should make people's hair stand on end. Even the Iranian Chief Justice, Ayatollah Mahmoud Shahroudi, praised the fasting people taking part in these rallies. He said:

The world arrogance [the US] .. today are shivering from Muslim vigilance and are on the threshold of annihilation.

That is the threat we should be looking at—what is being said in Iran in trying to adjust the situation in Iraq. (*Time expired*)

Mr BRUCE SCOTT (Maranoa) (1.42 pm)—I rise this afternoon to speak on the motion moved by my good friend the member for Ryan relating to the government's remaining committed to the Iraqi people and against terrorist groups through the international community. I remind the House of the recent events in Iraq, yet another example of why we must not cut and run from Iraq. Just last week Baghdad saw one of its bloodiest attacks on Sada City, when Sunni insurgents coordinated the explosion of five car bombs, killing at least 202 people and injuring 252. Shiite border teams quickly retaliated by firing at the most important Sunni shrine in Baghdad and on two other Sunni neighbourhoods. This tragic loss of innocent life is evidence that the work to build a stable, democratic and free society has not been finished in Iraq. The Australian government certainly remains committed to assisting the Iraqi people to live in a country where they are not oppressed by a Taliban style regime. We have seen the brutality of such a regime in Afghanistan, and we should not permit it to be repeated. The presence of Australian Defence Force troops undoubtedly has a place in Iraq until such time that all Iraqi people can live without the pain and suffering so often inflicted by insurgents and terrorists.

It is crucial that we do not have a date for withdrawal. If Australia wants to withdraw from its role in Iraq prematurely, the consequences could be dire. We would, in effect, be abandoning the majority of Iraqi people and placing them into the hands of the insurgents and the terrorists. Furthermore, the insurgents and terrorists will use propaganda to claim victory and to gain a vital recruitment tool to encourage radically

inclined Muslims to join their cause. This effect would not be isolated to Iraq in the Middle East but would likely flow through to part of South-East Asia, especially Indonesia.

The SPEAKER—Order! It being 1.45 pm, the debate is interrupted in accordance with standing order 43. The debate is adjourned and the resumption of the debate will be made an order of the day for the next sitting. The honourable member for Maranoa will have leave to continue speaking when the debate is resumed.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women

Mr GARRETT (Kingsford Smith) (1.45 pm)—The date 25 November is International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, otherwise known as White Ribbon Day. As one of the White Ribbon Day ambassadors, I, along with a number of members from both sides of the House, as well as businesspeople, sports leaders and others in the community, take very seriously the fact that males have to stand up and say clearly and unequivocally that violence of any kind against women is not acceptable. It could be violence against someone's mother, someone's niece, someone that we know in the family or someone's grandmother. In Australia, the level of violence against women is unacceptably high. Over their lifetimes, about one in three women will experience some act of violence against them. It is simply unacceptable. The emotional cost is extreme. The financial cost is estimated at over \$8 billion a year.

On Friday, 24 November, I was very pleased to be able to make a presentation at the Royal Randwick Shopping Centre and to have the assistance of members of the community and students from Randwick Boys High School in handing out white ribbons to people in the Kingsford Smith electorate. We wanted to make it very clear that it is necessary for us not only to have a public response to the levels of violence in the community, such as a program that Labor leader Kim Beazley committed himself to on White Ribbon Day, but additionally to have a private response to it. It is not acceptable that there is violence of any kind against women. (*Time expired*)

Pierre Gemayel

Mr CADMAN (Mitchell) (1.46 pm)—There has been a tragic loss of yet another Christian leader in Lebanon. Can the blame be directed at competing Christian forces or the Jews? Not likely. Having spent time over 20 years ago with the leaders of Lebanon, I, along with all people of goodwill who want to see a bright and prosperous future for the people of Lebanon, mourn today the death of Pierre Gemayel. I know his father. I knew his grandfather. I also knew Pierre's Uncle Bashir. There was much similarity in the life of

Pierre to that of his Uncle Bashir. Pierre is now dead. What a loss. What a great shame it is that Lebanon should lose someone of his capacity and with such a future. All Lebanon should mourn.

Those forces working against Lebanon seem to consider that the chaos, mayhem and destruction of life and property in Iraq is the way in which residents of the Middle East should spend their lives. I do not believe it. Most of the world does not believe it, yet the vile persecution of those who dare disagree continues. Is the only solution to sink to the depths of those who conduct these assassinations? Should all the gains of civilisation be set aside to pursue those barbarians? If Lebanon is important and if it is to survive, then the blood bond of being Lebanese should be paramount. Other countries that have survived despite massive opposition and similar destructive elements being raged against them have done so only by being unified. The answer lies in pursuing those who give the orders, not just the executioners, and removing them. (*Time expired*)

Badgerys Creek Airport

Mrs IRWIN (Fowler) (1.48 pm)—On 16 November, I attended a public meeting at Kemp's Creek Public School to hear the concerns of residents from the districts surrounding Badgerys Creek. The residents spoke of the problems they face in developing their properties, including demands for double glazing on windows, air-conditioning and other expensive noise reduction measures.

The Liberal members for the area, including the member for Lindsay, Jackie Kelly, and the member for Macarthur, Pat Farmer, went to the last election promising that there would be no airport built at Badgerys Creek. The Prime Minister said that there would be no airport there in the foreseeable future and promised that a final decision would be made by 2005. It is now a year later and the residents of this area are still in limbo. There has been no word from the Prime Minister. It is time for the government to come clean and tell us why it will not scrap plans for Badgerys Creek airport.

The Prime Minister complains about the New South Wales government affecting land prices in Sydney, but his own government is responsible for tying up the development of thousands of hectares of land around Badgerys Creek. This broken promise by the government is continuing to cause distress to the many residents around the site. It is time the government honoured its promise and lifted the airport site plan. If not, it will be up to Labor, after the 2007 election and when we are in government, to once and for all scrap Badgerys Creek airport. (*Time expired*)

Ian Thorpe

Mr BAIRD (Cook) (1.50 pm)—I rise today to speak about my electorate's favourite son—in fact, he is one of Australia's favourite sons—the outstanding athlete Ian Thorpe, and about his decision last week to retire from professional sport. His five Olympic gold medals and current world records in the 200-metre and 400-metre freestyle and 4 x 200 metre freestyle relay, as well as numerous other Commonwealth and Olympic records, hold Ian Thorpe as one of our and, indeed, one of the world's best ever swimmers—in the history of the sport.

Aside from Ian Thorpe being one of the country's most prolific sports achievers, he is also renowned for his humility both in and out of the pool. It is admirable to see the way in which he has managed his achievements to the benefit of others. It is these great qualities that make him an icon for younger Australians striving for the chance to one day exhibit the greatness that he has achieved. The work he has done with his charity, the Fountain for Youth Foundation, has enabled money to be raised in areas of Indigenous health and education and for the Red Cross youth programs, the Children's Cancer Institute of Australia and a number of other very worthy causes both in Australia and abroad.

I join with the nation in their disappointment about Thorpe's retirement; however, I also commend him for his courage to follow his feelings, despite national pressure for him to continue swimming. On behalf of my electorate and all Australians, I thank him for the inspiration he has instilled in millions of us. I wish him all the best for the future, no matter what it holds for Ian Thorpe. (*Time expired*)

Canberra Electorate: Lanyon High School

Ms ANNETTE ELLIS (Canberra) (1.51 pm)—Today I want to bring to the attention of the House something that I am very proud of—the wonderful example of the public education system in my electorate of Canberra. Last Wednesday evening, I had the pleasure of attending the 10th birthday celebration of Lanyon High School. Lanyon High School is in the southern end of my electorate and it services the newest urban area in it. Lanyon High School turning 10 was a very big event, but what really pleased me was to see such wonderful examples of the public education system and the teachers in it doing such a terrific job.

We had singing groups, drama, Shakespeare, several short films and dance items, all coming from the students, with the films written and produced by the students. We also had juniors from the feeder primary schools of Charles Conder Primary School, Tharwa Primary School—which is a wonderful historic little primary school in my area—and Bonython Primary School coming along and participating in what will probably be their high school of the future.

I put on record my congratulations, in particular to all of the staff and all of the helpers at Lanyon High School, for this terrific example of what they are achieving. Academically, they are doing wonderfully well, and this 10th birthday celebration went so well. My best wishes also, of course, go to every one of the students, whether they be from Lanyon or from Conder, Tharwa or Bonython primary schools, for a wonderful evening. (*Time expired*)

Member for Lindsay

Badgerys Creek Airport

Miss JACKIE KELLY (Lindsay) (1.53 pm)—I am getting a bit fed up with the member for Fowler coming in here time and time again like a rooster into the henhouse, flapping and chooking about, misrepresenting my position on so many things. First she came in here talking about my travel. I laid a wreath at Gallipoli for the people of Penrith, the people of Lindsay, for the first time that that has ever occurred.

As for Badgerys Creek, here she is, chooking on about Badgerys Creek. It was the Labor Party that put it there. Anne Cohen was the Liberal who stood up against the Labor Party putting that airport there. Diane Beamer in her maiden speech talks about supporting it. As the Mayor of Penrith, she actively supported it. Your federal members previously in your seats actively worked to get that airport put there at Badgerys Creek. This government has no plans for a second airport. The only people with a plan for a second airport are you.

The SPEAKER—Order! I remind the member for Lindsay that she should address her remarks through the chair.

Chaldean Catholic Church: Archbishop Gabriel Kassab

Iraq

Mr BOWEN (Prospect) (1.54 pm)—On 8 October I was honoured to attend the installation of Archbishop Gabriel Kassab as Bishop of the Chaldean Catholic Church for Australia and New Zealand, and I welcome him to the gallery today. He is accompanied by Deacon Janan Hanan; Samir Youseff, President of the Chaldean National Congress; and former Mayor of Fairfield, Anwar Khoshaba. Present at his installation were the Catholic Bishop of Bathurst and representatives of sister churches. Archbishop Kassab was first ordained as a bishop by His Holiness Pope John Paul II in 1995. He has been a priest since 1961. He is the first Bishop for Australia and New Zealand for the Chaldean Church. The Chaldean community is well known and respected in my electorate and throughout Australia. It is a very ancient faith.

May I again, in the House today, put on record the need to protect the rights of minorities in Iraq, as represented by the Chaldeans, Assyrians, Mandaeans and others. The situation in Iraq now is desperate, and we

as a House must continually remind the coalition of the willing and others that the minorities in Iraq need protection. There are thousands of refugees in Syria and Jordan who are fleeing persecution in Iraq as we speak, and many more thousands have of course tragically lost their lives. I again welcome the archbishop to the gallery today, and I wish him well in his time as Archbishop for Australia and New Zealand. (*Time expired*)

Wakefield Electorate: Riverton Primary School

Mr FAWCETT (Wakefield) (1.55 pm)—I rise today to draw the attention of the House to the excellent work of the students of Riverton Primary School in the electorate of Wakefield. The year 4-5 class of Riverton Primary School has won, for the second time, the South Australian state award for the Department of Veterans' Affairs Anzac Day prize. These students two years ago won the prize, last year received an honourable mention and again, this year, won the prize for this work, which was an opportunity for them to connect with members of the veterans community and to use a range of resources to bring together their understanding of what sacrifice and remembrance has meant. These young students in a small country school have done an outstanding job for three years in a row to either have won or have had an outstanding mention in this award. It was my privilege on Friday to go to Riverton with the principal, Jackie Cox, and to present to the school and the year 4-5 class the \$1,000 cheque from the Department of Veterans' Affairs, as well as the plaque which recognises their outstanding achievements in this regard.

Mr Nguyen Tuong Van

Ms BURKE (Chisholm) (1.57 pm)—This Saturday marks the first anniversary of the death of Van Nguyen, who was unceremoniously executed in Singapore 12 months ago. Since his death, we have not stopped the drug trafficking. We have not stopped people stupidly going there and trafficking drugs. We have now had more Australians caught up in foreign countries who will also be facing execution. His death was a tragic waste of human life. Yes, he should have been punished—he should be punished severely—but not by execution. I had the sad pleasure of meeting with Kim Nguyen, his mother, last week. She still cannot come to terms with her situation. Day in, day out, she sees herself as the victim of this crime, of this execution. She does not like to leave her home. She does not like to interact with people. It is such a tragic waste of human life. Van should have been punished severely, but not by execution. This Saturday, there will be a memorial service at one of our churches to commemorate the life of Van Nguyen. Execution has served no purpose in this exercise or in any exercise.

Mr Jim Jarvis

Ms KATE ELLIS (Adelaide) (1.58 pm)—It is with great sadness that I report to the House the death of Mr Jim Jarvis, who passed away on Monday, 1 November at the age of 71. Jim Jarvis was a former Lord Mayor of Adelaide, once a Fleet Street journalist, a business entrepreneur and a very proud Adelaidian. Whilst he will be remembered by many for his role as the city's 73rd lord mayor, leading the council from 1985 to 1987, he also served on a number of charitable and advisory boards, and he ran his own successful marketing firm, JB Jarvis and Associates.

I had the privilege of meeting and working with Jim Jarvis in recent times. He made a wonderful contribution to the South Australian community, business and social life, and he did some particularly admirable work during his time with World Vision and the Don Dunstan Foundation. Jim was a true family man, a devoted father and husband to his large family. On behalf of many of my constituents in the electorate of Adelaide, I would like to express my sincerest condolences to Jim's wife, Sky, his family and friends. I know he will be sorely missed by our community and all those he has touched all over the world. I thank him for the wonderful contribution that he has made to the city of Adelaide.

Mr Damien Leith

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler) (1.59 pm)—I rise to congratulate a constituent of mine, Damien Leith, of Stanmore, on being the Australian Idol for 2006. Damien is a proud resident of the inner west, and I am proud to represent a community that has the greatest number of artists of any electorate in Australia. I congratulate Damien and his family. I look forward to him becoming an Australian citizen early next year.

The SPEAKER—Order! It being 2 pm, in accordance with standing order 43, the time for members' statements has concluded.

CONDOLENCES**Hon. Sir Allen Fairhall KBE****Hon. Sir Harold Young KCMG**

Mr HOWARD (Bennelong—Prime Minister) (2.00 pm)—I move:

That this House records its deep regret at the death on 3 November 2006 of the Honourable Sir Allen Fairhall KBE, former Federal Minister and Member for Paterson (NSW) and the death on 21 November 2006 of the Honourable Sir Harold William Young KCMG, former President of the Senate and Senator for South Australia, and that the House places on record its appreciation of their long and meritorious public service, and tenders its profound sympathy to their families in their bereavement.

I will talk first about the late Sir Allen Fairhall. On my calculation, he was the last surviving Liberal forty-niner. I think the only other surviving forty-niner is

Clyde Cameron, the former member from South Australia and minister in the Whitlam government.

Allen Fairhall was born on 24 November 1909 at Morpeth, near Maitland, in the lower Hunter Valley in New South Wales. He was educated at the East Maitland Boys High School and later at the Newcastle Technical College. He served an apprenticeship as an electrical fitter at the Walsh Island Dockyard, Newcastle, becoming a qualified tradesman in that field.

While at school, Allen became interested in radio and began broadcasting music on Sunday mornings from his family home, using a gramophone and borrowed records. In 1931, he founded the commercial broadcasting station 2KO Newcastle, operating with a 13-metre timber mast in his backyard. Radio 2KO grew to be one of Australia's leading provincial radio stations. In 1942, he became President of the Australian Federation of Commercial Broadcasting Stations.

From 1941 to 1944, Allen was an alderman on Newcastle City Council. During World War II, Allen was also co-opted by the Ministry of Munitions to become supervising engineer of the Radio and Signals Supply Section in New South Wales. In 1947, he sold his broadcasting interests and took up dairy farming at Trevallyn, on the Paterson River.

Allen entered federal parliament as the member for Paterson in 1949 and held that seat for the Liberal Party until his retirement on 12 November 1969. He was appointed as the Minister for the Interior and for Works in 1956 by Sir Robert Menzies. He was appointed as the Minister for Supply in December 1961 and was reappointed to that portfolio, with cabinet rank, after the elections of 1963. When the Holt government was formed in 1966, after the retirement of Menzies, Allen Fairhall was appointed Minister for Defence, a position he held until his retirement.

It is fair to say that, when Harold Holt drowned in December 1967, there were many people in the Liberal Party, particularly in New South Wales, who saw Allen Fairhall as a possible replacement leader. He rejected overtures at that time from quite a number of his colleagues in New South Wales and from senior people in the New South Wales division of the party, and made it very plain that he did not see himself as aspiring to a leadership position. It is believed that he did not enjoy the most harmonious relationship with John Gorton during the time that the latter was Prime Minister. He retired from parliament in 1969.

In 1966 he was chosen by the Institution of Production Engineers (Australian Division) to receive the James N Kirby Medal for his role in the development of defence production industries. He was knighted in 1970 in recognition of his service to the public, to broadcasting and to the parliament.

I knew Allen Fairhall—not, of course, as a fellow member of parliament, as he left this place some five years before I entered, but in the party organisation I did come across him on numerous occasions. He was a very plain-speaking, likeable man who was possessed of a very practical understanding of situations. He always offered a pragmatic view of life. He always thought the best of people with whom he came into contact. He was a very popular colleague amongst his fellow parliamentarians. On behalf of the government, I offer condolences to his wife, Lady Monica Fairhall, his son, Allen, and his extended family.

Can I also record my sadness at the death on 21 November of Sir Harold Young, whom I did serve with for a number of years and who is well known as a former senator from South Australia and also as President of the Senate at the time of the defeat of the Fraser government in 1983.

Before entering parliament, Harold was a farmer based at Gilberton in South Australia. He was a strong advocate for the farming industry and served as a member of the Australian Wool Industry Conference, the Federal Exporters Overseas Transport Committee and the South Australian State Wheat Research Committee. He retained, throughout his entire life and career, a very active interest in farming, and he brought an understanding of that industry to all of his parliamentary work and parliamentary contributions.

Sir Harold was regarded very warmly by those on both sides of politics as a very fair and competent President of the Senate. The late Don Chipp is recorded in *Hansard* as saying that Sir Harold Young had done an extremely fair and creditable job as President, under very difficult circumstances. It is worth noting that, in the whole time that he was President of the Senate, not once was any motion of dissent moved against any of his rulings.

Sir Harold served in a variety of positions in opposition after the defeat of the Fraser government and also before. He was knighted in 1983 for his service to the parliament, being made a Knight Commander of the Most Distinguished Order of St Michael and St George. Our current President of the Senate, Senator Calvert, is absent today attending Sir Harold's funeral service as a representative of the Senate. On behalf of the government, I record my regard for Harold Young as a good friend and a good colleague, somebody who always took a very lively interest in the welfare of the government and the welfare of the Liberal Party in South Australia. I offer condolences to his wife, Lady Margaret Young; to his children, Sue, Scott, Andrea and Rob; and to his large extended family.

Mr BEAZLEY (Brand—Leader of the Opposition) (2.08 pm)—I want to support the remarks of the Prime Minister in regard to the passing of Sir Allen Fairhall and Sir Harold Young. They are, of course, two of our

opponents' substantial figures and, therefore, not necessarily well known to people on this side of the House—though, as it happens, over time, I met both of them.

As the Prime Minister said, Allen Fairhall was the last of the Liberal class of 1949, who entered federal politics in the election that started the Menzies ascendancy. He was born near Maitland in the Hunter Valley. He trained as an electrical fitter but his first passion was radio. He was one of the pioneers of the Australian radio industry and, as he founded a radio station, he performed the roles of engineer, announcer, disc jockey, copywriter and salesman. This led to a very unusual career, during World War II, after he had been rejected by the RAAF in World War II on medical grounds.

In 1941 he was coopted by the Ministry of Munitions as supervising engineer of the Radio and Signals Section in New South Wales. He was responsible for the production of wireless signals and radar equipment for the armed services. In 1941, as Australia was rapidly gearing up for the Allied war effort, he was coopted by the Ministry of Munitions to become supervising engineer; and, in World War II, he was responsible for a fair proportion of the equipment that was produced in those new areas of technology, in particular in relation to radar. In those three years, he worked for the ministry in an honorary capacity.

He won the seat of Paterson in 1949 and, seven years later, was the Minister for the Interior and Works. In 1961 he was promoted to cabinet as supply minister. When Harold Holt succeeded Menzies, during the turbulent years of the Vietnam War, he was moved to defence. In those days, I understand, the defence minister had three junior ministers beneath him. In Mr Fairhall's time these included Malcolm Fraser as army minister and Peter Howson as air minister. Both were ambitious. Fraser was scathing about what he viewed as Mr Fairhall's inability to resolve interservice disputes. That may well have said more about Mr Fraser than it did about Mr Fairhall; nevertheless, there was a clash of opinions.

That clash of opinions was not as substantial as the clash of opinions that occurred after the death of Harold Holt. That placed Mr Fairhall firmly in a position of disagreement with Mr Holt's successor, Prime Minister Gorton. He was worried that Mr Gorton was going down what he perceived to be an isolationist road. He was concerned that Mr Gorton did not share the strong sense of commitment he felt for the Vietnam War effort. He also believed, of course, that Prime Minister Gorton was increasingly making announcements without consultation.

The upshot of all of that was that Sir Alan Fairhall left politics. He had a lengthy career in politics of 20 years. He has had a lengthy time since politics to enjoy

a retirement which he identified as enabling him to devote himself to business interests, family life in Newcastle, amateur radio broadcasting and deep-sea fishing. On behalf of the opposition, I want to express our deepest sympathy to Lady Monica and their son Allen.

South Australian Harold Young was elected to the Senate in 1967 and was Government Whip from August 1971 until the coalition lost office in December 1972. He was Opposition Whip during the terms of the Labor government and opposition spokesman on the media in 1975. He was Senate President from 1981 to 1983. Before his election to the Senate, he was a wheat farmer and grazier at Gilberton in South Australia. He was regarded as a tireless advocate for primary industry. On his departure from the Senate in 1983, Senator Button said:

Senator Sir Harold Young was, I think, regarded by all senators as a very fair and decent President of the Senate.

Senator Don Chipp said:

He was a great fighter for the Parliament and the Senate against the greedy clutches of the Executive. I think all honourable senators should thank him for that.

Senator Messner said:

To my mind he was one of the most popular politicians in South Australia. Whenever we travelled together throughout the State, however remote the locality, he would either have a relative in the immediate vicinity or be well known to people in the area.

Our sympathy goes to his widow, Lady Young, and his four children. Unlike Allen Fairhall, whom I met once or twice around Parliament House as a boy, Sir Harold I did know as a senator. In the very short acquaintance that I had with him—and in the acquaintance that I had with him at airports, where one meets folk around the country from time to time—those judgements made by Senator Button, Senator Chipp and Senator Messner have, in my experience, been amply borne out. Our sympathy is with his widow and four children.

Mr VAILE (Lyne—Deputy Prime Minister) (2.14 pm)—I support the condolence motion moved by the Prime Minister with regard to Sir Allen Fairhall and Sir Harold Young. Australia has a great history of inventors and engineers and people who start the most remarkable businesses from home. Every Australian knows the story of Merv Richardson and how he made the first Victa lawnmower in his garage, and that of Lance Hill, who famously built the first Hills hoist. Sir Allen Fairhall has to be counted amongst their company. In 1931 he founded 2KO in Newcastle. He built his own transmitter, studio and a 13-metre timber mast in his own backyard. I cannot help wondering what his power bill must have been in those days!

In the first month he sold only 80c worth of advertising, but he persevered until 2KO became one of Australia's leading regional radio stations. During the

war he was co-opted by the Ministry of Munitions as the supervising engineer of its New South Wales Radio and Signals Supply Section. Sir Allen entered parliament as the member for Paterson in 1949—indeed, the year that the electorate of Lyne was first constituted. He stood for parliament because he was concerned about the Chifley government's plan to nationalise the banks. Throughout his parliamentary career he maintained his interest in technology and his vigilance against socialism at home and the threat of communist expansion overseas. It was not surprising that he ended up in the defence portfolio. Sir Allen held the supply portfolio from 1961 to 1966 and was then commissioned as the Minister for Defence. As you would expect, Sir Allen understood the difficulties involved in getting cutting-edge technologies into production. After all, he was responsible for building radar sets in the war at a time when radar was at the outside edge of what was technologically possible. He was a staunch advocate of the F111, even though Prime Minister Gorton was dubious about it and the Labor Party regarded it as a waste of money. At one point he described the F111 as the 'Cadillac of the skies'. The passage of time has shown that he was right.

Sir Allen was a strong advocate of forward defence and had a series of disagreements with Prime Minister Gorton about Australia's defence policy. He retired in August 1969. He was unwell and evidently tired of his constant disagreements with John Gorton at the time. Sir Allen was knighted in 1970 and returned to his private business interests, which included a printing firm that he operated with his son. Sir Allen also wrote two books, including a coffee-table book about Newcastle, called *Newcastle: symphony of a city*. His love for the city shines from every page of that publication. On behalf of my party, I want to express my condolences to his wife, Lady Monica Fairhall, his family and friends.

Sir Harold Young was a wheat farmer and a grazier before he entered parliament as a senator for South Australia in 1968. He was a great advocate for Australia's primary producers. Most notably, he was a member of the federal exporters overseas transport committee. This committee had the job of negotiating freight rates with the shipping industry, which was essentially a British monopoly at the time. The Australian shippers and the government had very little negotiating clout, and there was no way to rebut the shipowners' claims about their costs because we just did not have the evidence. Today we would run a computer model of the trade between Australia and Europe, but that option was not available in the 1960s. In the end, the Australian government took over some empty watersheds and simulated every movement of the British and European merchant fleets, using model ships. The operation ran 24 hours a day for several months until it generated the figures that were needed by the Australian negotiators.

As a result, freight rates fell substantially and shipping lines became much more efficient.

Sir Harold maintained his interest in primary industries after he entered the Senate in 1967-68, but he developed a strong focus on the procedures and management of the chamber. He served as Government Whip from 1971 to 1972 and then as Opposition Whip from 1972 to 1975. He was the Chairman of Committees from 1976 until 1981, so he was ideally placed to become the President of the Senate in 1981. It was a difficult time. The Australian Democrats had just won the balance of power in the Senate and made it clear that they were going to use it to 'keep the bastards honest', as they said many times. It was Senator Button, however, who said that Sir Harold's success as president would be measured by the extent that they were 'touched by the wand of tolerance, firmness and complete impartiality'. There is no doubt that Sir Harold had that magic touch.

The Prime Minister has already noted that there was not a single motion of dissent moved against any of his rulings during his time in office. He was knighted for his contribution to the parliament in 1983 and retired later that year. On behalf of my party, I join with the Prime Minister to express our condolences to his wife, Lady Margaret Young, his family and friends.

Ms MACKLIN (Jagajaga) (2.19 pm)—I would like to join with earlier speakers to pay tribute to Sir Harold Young, who died at home in Adelaide just last week. As earlier speakers have said, Sir Harold certainly is regarded as a man who did a very difficult job well, a fair man and, I think we would all say, a gentleman. Sir Harold served as a Liberal senator for South Australia, including a period as President of the Senate from 1981 to 1983. I thank the member for Barton, whose father, former Deputy President of the Senate, Doug McClelland, has been kind enough to pass on some of his experiences working with Sir Harold during his time as Senate President. He tells me:

Sir Harold managed to run the Senate without showing any favouritism and without incurring the rancour of his political opponents.

Doug McClelland describes Sir Harold as:

... a very down-to-earth and fair person who was respected by all sides, inclusive in the way that he ran Senate affairs.

Doug also credits Sir Harold as helping him develop his own skills in the Senate, and he remembers his involvement in the establishment of this new Parliament House. Perhaps as a very personal reflection, Doug and Lorna McClelland formed a very close friendship with Sir Harold and Lady Margaret Young and kept in touch beyond the conclusion of their respective political careers.

We in the parliament know that to be held in such high regard is a product of commitment and skill. Perhaps it is a reminder that Sir Harold was from another

time in our history. He was the last President of the Senate to wear the wig and gown and the first to appoint a female attendant in the Senate. Along with earlier speakers, I express my condolences to Sir Harold's family and friends.

I would also like to pay tribute to Sir Allen Fairhall, who died earlier this month. As others have said, he represented the Liberal Party for a long period. As the Prime Minister indicated, he was a possible candidate for Prime Minister in 1967, following the drowning of Sir Harold Holt, but I gather he withdrew on the grounds of ill health. However, he served in a number of portfolios and, in particular, I acknowledge his time as Minister for Defence in the difficult period during the Vietnam War.

He retired from politics just before the 1969 election. I gather that, on his retirement, he told the *Sydney Morning Herald* that he wanted a complete break—saying that he had had 20 years of heavy pressure night and day—and that his break had been complete. He said, 'I don't need a diary to tell me what I'm doing next Thursday; I know already: nothing.' In fact, that did not turn out to be the case. His life, post parliament, continued to be a very active one, well into his 90s. He published two books. I think he will be very fondly remembered for all that he contributed. On his retirement in 1969, the then Labor member for Bass and shadow defence minister, Lance Barnard, said of Sir Allen:

He has made a tremendous contribution as a member and as a responsible minister in this parliament. We may disagree with him politically, but the fact remains that he has not spared himself in his efforts on behalf of the party he has represented with very great distinction. He has certainly not spared himself on behalf of the people of this country.

Again, I would like to express my condolences to Sir Allen's family and friends.

Question agreed to, honourable members standing in their places.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Oil for Food Program

Mr BEAZLEY (2.24 pm)—My question is to the Prime Minister. I refer the Prime Minister to this March 2006 letter from the Cole commission. It states in black and white that Mr Cole had no power to make determinations on whether ministers had breached their legal obligations under Australia's prohibited export regulations. Why did the Prime Minister rort the Cole inquiry's terms of reference by refusing to give it the power to determine whether ministers upheld their legal obligations?

Mr HOWARD—The government did not rort the terms of the inquiry. The Australian public will have an opportunity in about an hour's time, or perhaps less, depending on the length of question time, to make up their own mind in relation to the farrago of falsehoods

that have been levelled against the government by the opposition.

Fiji

Mr CADMAN (2.25 pm)—My question is addressed to the Minister for Foreign Affairs. What is the government's reaction to the latest comments by the Fijian military commander to remove the Fijian government within the next few days if they do not accede to his demands?

Mr DOWNER—First of all, can I thank the member for Mitchell for his question and his interest. The government is very concerned about comments made last week by Commodore Bainimarama, who is the head of the Fiji military force, saying that he was planning to remove the democratically elected government of Fiji in the next two weeks if they do not accede to a whole series of demands that he as the head of the military has made.

The Australian government, the New Zealand government, the British and American governments and other governments—certainly those four—have made it absolutely clear to the Fiji military that this kind of language and these kinds of threats are completely unacceptable and that these threats, particularly if they are carried out, will threaten Fiji's political and economic stability.

Last Thursday I spoke with Prime Minister Qarase of Fiji and suggested to him that it might now be worth reconsidering an earlier discussion we would have with Fiji about bringing together the Pacific Islands Forum foreign ministers to address this crisis and to do so under the auspices of what is called the Biketawa Declaration. I am pleased that Fiji, in its capacity as chairman of the Pacific Islands Forum, and the Secretary General of the forum, Greg Urwin, have now agreed to call this meeting, which will take place in Sydney on Friday.

We are doing everything we possibly can to try to stop Commodore Bainimarama from moving ahead with his coup in Fiji, but there is no doubt that he is somewhat committed to this course of action. We are deeply concerned about this and there will, of course, be significant consequences for Fiji's standing in the international community. I also think it will make the Fiji military a much less attractive partner in peace-keeping operations for the United Nations and, indeed, for other countries—such as ours—which work with and train the Fiji security forces.

The Fijians, particularly the Fiji military, need to reflect on the fact that in 2000 there was a coup in Fiji and it had a devastating effect on Fiji's economy—maybe not such a devastating effect on the people mounting a coup, although, indeed, in that case, in the end, it did. I mean by 'economy' the ordinary people of Fiji, whose living standards plunged as a result of that

coup. A further coup will have exactly the same consequence on the livelihoods of the ordinary people of Fiji.

Given recent developments we have now upgraded our travel advisory for Fiji. We recommend that, due to the increasingly volatile situation, Australians reconsider the need to travel at this time. The situation there could deteriorate at any time without warning.

The government is making sensible preparations in case the situation does deteriorate so that not only are we able to respond through our consular mechanisms but also the Australian Defence Force will be able to help Australians if they get into difficulty in Fiji in the event of there being a coup. There are up to 7,000 Australians in Fiji at any given time; about 1,750 Australians live in Fiji, and we have 4,000 to 5,000 visitors there on any given day. We are very concerned about the comments made by Commodore Bainimarama—so are the New Zealanders and a number of other countries.

Commodore Bainimarama has been in New Zealand for the christening of his grandchild over the last few days, and the New Zealand government has used that opportunity to make very clear to him the views of the New Zealand government on this issue and the consequences for the relationship between New Zealand and Fiji if a coup were to go ahead. I hope the Commodore understands these messages from Fiji's friends and neighbours that the region is united in endeavouring to ensure that a coup does not take place in Fiji.

Oil for Food Program

Mr BEAZLEY (2.30 pm)—My question is to the Prime Minister and I refer to his defence in his radio broadcast that Mr Cole had full powers and that if he wanted more powers all he needed to do was ask. Prime Minister, is it not a fact that in this March 2006 letter the Cole inquiry said it had no power whatsoever to make determinations about whether ministers upheld their legal obligations under Australia's prohibited exports regulations. Is it not also the case that the inquiry said in this letter that it was entirely a matter for the government to decide, not for Mr Cole to request, whether such a large expansion of powers should be granted to the Cole inquiry. Will the Prime Minister now concede that this statement shows that he deliberately rorted Mr Cole's terms of reference to protect himself and his ministers?

Honourable members interjecting—

Mr Beazley—You failed miserably.

The SPEAKER—Order! I call the Prime Minister.

Mr Beazley—Useless, negligent twit.

The SPEAKER—Order! The Leader of the Opposition will withdraw that remark.

Mr Beazley—I withdraw.

Ms Gillard—Mr Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The Minister for Foreign Affairs used an unparliamentary expression—the word was ‘liar’—in respect of the Leader of the Opposition, and I ask for it to be withdrawn.

The SPEAKER—I did not hear that but if the minister said that I ask him to withdraw.

Mr Downer—Mr Speaker, I withdraw.

Mr HOWARD—The answer to the Leader of the Opposition’s question is no. What I said yesterday, which he did not accurately quote, was that Mr Cole had said in February of last year that if, during the his investigation, he discovered evidence that an officer of the Commonwealth—and that includes a minister—had broken a law of the Commonwealth, a state or territory, he would seek an extension of his terms of reference. He sought no such extension.

It will be up to the Australian public when they read the report to draw their conclusions about the false allegations of dishonesty, negligence, bribery and corruption that have been made by the Leader of the Opposition and his colleague from Griffith for the last year. When the report comes out, the Australian public can judge the veracity of the outrageous allegations that have been made, especially against the character of the Minister for Foreign Affairs who, in my view, has done an outstanding job representing the interests of this nation abroad. It is very easy to fling those sorts of allegations around under parliamentary privilege, but once the report is out the Australian public will make a judgement about the standards and behaviour of the Leader of the Opposition.

G20 Meeting

Mr BARRESI (2.34 pm)—My question is addressed to the Treasurer. Would the Treasurer outline to the House the results of the G20 meeting of finance ministers and central bank governors last week?

Mr COSTELLO—I thank the honourable member for Deakin for his question. I can report to the House that the Group of 20 central bank governors and finance ministers met in Melbourne over 18 and 19 November. The group brings together the 19 systemically important economies of the world plus the European Union. It represents over 85 per cent of global GDP and two-thirds of global population. It is the premier economic forum to look at global issues and economic prospects.

This forum brought together the key producers and consumers in world energy markets. The summit came to an agreement about ways to progress increased investment, openness, transparency and better pricing in those markets. It highlighted the benefits of the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative and garnered support for that, and called for the Joint Oil Data Initiative to be extended to other energy sectors such as

natural gas. Getting certainty in world energy markets will be a big part of ensuring affordable energy and also containing global inflation.

In addition to that, the meeting pressed ahead with reform of the Bretton Woods institutions. It has become a premier forum for reforming those institutions. It also analysed demographic change, and Australia made an offer to countries with ageing populations to assist with retirement incomes products and policy. In addition to that, it dealt with the issues of aid commitments and effectiveness. Many of those who were present indicated it was the best summit that the G20 has ever held.

I would like to thank the officers of the Treasury, led by Martin Parkinson, who did such an outstanding job; the people of the Grand Hyatt in Melbourne for their work; Comcar, who did all the transport; and especially the Victoria Police, who had to put up with quite outrageous violence on the streets of Melbourne run by anarchist, socialist and other far-left groups. I want to particularly thank Gary Jamieson and Mick Williams, who were responsible for the security arrangements. I think all reasoned, thinking people would say that the right to protest is one thing but that appearing in the streets of a major capital city, charging barricades, destroying property and invading shops is totally unacceptable in our society and that police officers should not have to endure assaults or urine filled balloons being thrown at them. I would hope that even the Labor Party would support that proposition as well. I would hope that the Labor Party as well would thank the Victoria Police.

Ms Gillard interjecting—

Mr COSTELLO—I do not know why the member for Lalor is interjecting.

Ms Gillard—I am agreeing with you.

Mr COSTELLO—Oh no, you weren’t. You were not agreeing. You were saying, ‘Grow up.’ No wonder you are going as red as your hair, Member for Lalor. You were caught. You were saying, ‘Grow up.’ You were not endorsing the Victoria Police at all. Now you can come out and say that every well-meaning person would do that, and I would have expected that from the outset rather than those kinds of interjections. I would expect both sides of this House to support the Victoria Police in their efforts to keep the streets of Melbourne secure for innocent and peaceable people.

Oil for Food Program

Mr RUDD (2.39 pm)—My question is to the Prime Minister. His answer to the last question referred to Mr Cole’s statement on his terms of reference of February 2006. Is it not a fact that the Cole inquiry stated in black and white in March 2006 that ‘It is not the function of a commissioner to determine his terms of reference’, that ‘It would not be appropriate for a commis-

sioner to seek amendment of the terms of reference to address a matter significantly different to that in his existing terms of reference', that determining whether 'a minister had breached the legal obligations imposed on him by Australian regulations' was a matter which lay significantly outside his existing terms of reference and, finally, that it was of course a matter for the executive government to determine whether or not those terms of reference should be expanded? Does not this letter fundamentally underline the fact that the Prime Minister has rorted the terms of reference with the object of defending the Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Minister for Transport and Regional Services from having determinations registered against them?

Mr HOWARD—I thought the Leader of the Opposition asked it better. Let me simply say that the answer to the honourable gentleman's question is no, and I would ask him to contain his energy, ambition or whatever it is for about another 50 minutes and he will be able to have a look at the findings of a person in whom the Leader of the Opposition expressed complete confidence in relation to both his ability and his independence.

I will be very interested to see how the Leader of the Opposition squares what is in the report—and I do not intend to talk about the contents of the report—and any reaction he may have to the report with what he said about the quality of Mr Cole, who I would hope is regarded as a lawyer of great integrity, great repute and great forensic skills and as a completely and fearlessly independent man. He plainly is. That is what the Leader of the Opposition acknowledged earlier. I hope he has the courage to acknowledge it later as well.

Infrastructure Investment

Mr NEVILLE (2.42 pm)—My question is to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Transport and Regional Services. Would the Deputy Prime Minister advise the House how the government is working to build infrastructure to support Australia's export industries, especially those of my electorate of Hinkler?

Mr VAILE—I thank the member for Hinkler for his question and particularly for his representation of an electorate that is a critical gateway for our export industries, particularly through Gladstone. It is now a well-known statistic that in 1996 exports were worth \$99 billion and in the last year they grew to \$200 billion, doubling in just over a decade. Of course, that requires significant investment in the logistical infrastructure in Australia, and one of the ways we have done that is through programs we have had in place. In the member for Hinkler's electorate we funded, through the Roads of National Importance program, the all-important port link road in Gladstone to remove the conflict between industrial traffic going to the port and the domestic or commercial traffic in and around the city. I know that the Mayor of Gladstone is very

appreciative of the support of the government in improving that infrastructure and, as the member for Hinkler often points out, there is more that needs to be done.

We also have a responsibility to look at larger infrastructure projects to ensure that those exports have a seamless path out of Australia through our ports. The member for Hinkler would be well aware that Australia's largest single export now is coal. Last year \$24.3 billion worth of coal went out through Australian ports, including the port of Gladstone, in his electorate. Just at the end of last week I was in Newcastle, in the port of Waratah. We opened a new piece of infrastructure there called the Sandgate rail flyover. The Commonwealth government, through AusLink, has invested \$80 million in removing the conflict between urban passenger transport trains, interstate freight trains and the all-important coal lines getting into the port. That piece of infrastructure will now increase the capacity of getting coal to the port by 20 million tonnes a year. So we will be able to get 20 million tonnes of extra coal down to the port each year. It is going to increase pressure on the port of Waratah.

The New South Wales government have been squarking loudly about how they have allocated an extra \$500 million to increase the capacity of the port of Waratah. They need to get on and do it. They need to stop fiddling around with the planning processes and get on and do it. There are currently almost 50 ships lined up off the port of Waratah, in Newcastle, waiting to be loaded with coal. The Commonwealth government has invested \$80 million to remove the one great impediment to the rail operation, bringing the coal down the Hunter Valley and getting it to the port. The New South Wales government, through its authority that runs the port of Newcastle, should get on with that investment to improve its capability.

The \$80 million we have invested in getting trains more efficiently to Kooragang is part of an overall \$2.4 billion investment in rail infrastructure across Australia to make our exports more competitive and more efficient. The member for Hinkler asked whether the port authority in Gladstone is planning investment in new facilities up there, and moving ahead of demand. We should see this coming from the New South Wales government and the Port of Waratah, to match what the Commonwealth has done, to ensure and secure the jobs of those working in the coal mining industries in the Hunter Valley well and truly into the future.

Oil for Food Program

Mr RUDD (2.46 pm)—I refer to the Prime Minister's answer to my last question. He answered in the negative. Given the Prime Minister's answer, which of the following statements, therefore, in the Prime Minister's view, were not made by the office of Commissioner Cole? Firstly, that it is not the function of a

commissioner to determine his terms of reference. Secondly, that it would not be appropriate for a commissioner to seek an amendment of the terms of reference to address a matter significantly different to that in the existing terms. Thirdly, that determining whether a minister had breached the legal obligations imposed on them by Australian regulations was a matter significantly outside his terms of reference. Fourthly, that it was open to the executive government to change the terms of reference. Prime Minister, these were all statements made by Commissioner Cole. In your view, which statements were not made by him?

Mr HOWARD—I will analyse the question, but let me begin with the terms of reference—and this is the central charge being made by the opposition. The Leader of the Opposition and the member for Griffith have worked themselves up into great indignity and fury trying to persuade the Australian public that we deliberately designed the terms of reference to protect ourselves. That argument has been completely blown out of the water by what Mr Cole said—but not in his report. The report will be coming down. I am not going to comment on the report until it has been tabled in the parliament. If you have a look at what he said on 3 February 2006 you will find that that allegation has been totally blown out of the water.

Domestic Sugar Levy

Mr CAUSLEY (2.48 pm)—My question is directed to the Treasurer. Would the Treasurer advise the House of the abolition of the sugar levy, which was designed to help the Australian sugar industry? Are there any tax proposals around at the moment which would lift taxes and hurt business and consumers?

Mr COSTELLO—I thank the honourable member for Page for his question. I can inform him that last week the coalition government announced the abolition of the sugar levy. The sugar levy was imposed to fund a \$444 million reform package for the sugar industry. It raised \$80 million towards that \$444 million.

Mr Tanner interjecting—

The SPEAKER—Order! The member for Melbourne!

Mr COSTELLO—The abolition of the sugar levy, which was 3c a kilogram, will save users of sugar \$28 million in the next year. I want to thank the member for Page and all of the others who represent sugar—

Mr Tanner interjecting—

The SPEAKER—Order! The member for Melbourne continues to interject. He is warned.

Mr COSTELLO—growing areas for their representations in relation to the levy. The levy's abolition has been received as great news for sugar growers and manufacturers. This is an example of the great policies of the coalition government. There are other tax proposals around at the moment which should be striking

fear into the hearts of business. One of them that does strike fear into the hearts of business is right here in the Australian Capital Territory. The ACT government has so mismanaged its budget that it has now announced a new tax relating to infrastructure on unleased ACT land. Companies which want to invest in new infrastructure, such as gas, electricity, water or telecommunications, will be hit with a new tax relating to the size of their infrastructure footprint. The more you invest, the more you will be taxed.

The rate to be applied per kilometre of infrastructure has not been announced, but the ACT government expects to collect \$8 million in 2006-07, rising to \$16.5 million in 2007-08. Who would think of introducing a new tax to tax, per kilometre, the installation of electricity or water or telecommunications? What sort of a government would do that? As the *Daily Telegraph* calls him, the Chief Minister of the ACT, 'John Stanhopeless', has thought up a tax on direct infrastructure. What a mockery this makes of the Australian Labor Party. The member for Lilley wanders around the country crowing on a daily basis about the need for more infrastructure.

Mr Swan interjecting—

The PRESIDENT—Order! The member for Lilley!

Mr COSTELLO—On 9 November 2005—

Mr Swan interjecting—

The SPEAKER—The member for Lilley!

Mr Swan interjecting—

The SPEAKER—The member for Lilley is warned.

Mr COSTELLO—The member for Lilley had this to say:

We need to ensure Australia's corporate tax regime encourages investment in much needed national infrastructure.

So there he is, demanding a tax system to encourage investment in infrastructure while the Labor government of the ACT imposes a direct new tax on every kilometre of infrastructure which is built!

The Leader of the Opposition was saying that we need national leadership on infrastructure, whilst the ALP is imposing a direct new tax on every kilometre of new infrastructure, including every kilometre of new cable or optic fibre which is required for broadband. If we are going to get national leadership in relation to infrastructure, the first principle ought to be this: condemnation of the ACT Labor Party new tax, a demand that it be withdrawn immediately and a guarantee from federal Labor that federal Labor will not be imposing new taxes on national infrastructure. If you want to know the difference between a coalition government and a Labor government you have seen it in this last week with the coalition government out there abolishing taxes and the Labor Party introducing new ones on national infrastructure.

Iraq

Mr BEAZLEY (2.53 pm)—My question is to the Prime Minister. Prime Minister, why is the decorated former SAS officer and Iraq war veteran Peter Tinley wrong to say that the basis of the Iraq war was ‘immoral because the government knew at the time that evidence of weapons of mass destruction was not conclusive yet they chose to believe it because of their own reasons’?

Mr HOWARD—The views expressed by that former SAS officer—and I pay tribute to all serving and former SAS officers, whatever their views may be on individual issues—reflect the fact that there has been on this issue a division of opinion within the Australian community and it is barely surprising that that division of opinion would be reflected in Defence Force individuals because they are part of the Australian community. The remark made by the former SAS officer related to the government’s state of knowledge in relation to weapons of mass destruction at the time of the invasion of Iraq. It is worth telling the House of an observation made on 7 February 2003, several weeks before the coalition operation. This observation reads as follows:

No foreign office or defence department official anywhere on the globe entertains the view that Iraq does not have weapons of mass destruction.

That is an unconditional assertion which I do not think even I made in quite those terms. I do not think the Minister for Foreign Affairs made such an assertion. I do not think even Tony Blair made such an assertion, but do you know who did make it? The Leader of the Opposition, on 7 February 2003. I will simply say he entertained a bona fide belief before the invasion and he was not basing it on something we had told him—just as the member for Griffith told the State Zionist Council of Victoria that it was ‘an empirical fact’. The truth of the matter is that both the Leader of the Opposition and the member for Griffith were fence-sitters on the question of the coalition operation. If it had gone differently, they would have turned around and said, ‘Silly old Simon shouldn’t have opposed it. If they had listened to me, we would not now be in this situation.’ The Leader of the Opposition, who wrote in the *Financial Review*, ‘No foreign office or defence department official anywhere on the globe entertains the view that Iraq does not have weapons of mass destruction,’ would now, three years later, parade to the world that he was always sceptical, that he always knew and that he was always a doubter, but the truth of the matter is that three years ago he was a weak fence-sitter and it now suits him to be a political opportunist.

The member for Griffith had better brief the Leader of the Opposition on it because they are both as bad as each other. There is no contest on this. They might be rivals for the leadership, but they are not rivals for hy-

pocrisy on the invasion of Iraq. They are co-conspirators in having had one position three years ago and now that it suits their miserable political hides to have a different position. I respect any SAS officer. He is entitled to his view. He belongs to a great democracy. Let nobody say that way back three years ago, when we were arguing on the basis of the intelligence we had that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction, that that was not the belief of the Leader of the Opposition and the member for Griffith.

Ms King interjecting—

The SPEAKER—Order! The member for Ballarat is warned!

Mr HOWARD—They are rolled-gold hypocrites for pretending otherwise.

Unemployment

Mr VASTA (2.58 pm)—My question is addressed to the Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations. Would the minister confirm that long-term unemployment has fallen to its lowest level in over 20 years? Is the minister aware of criticism of the government’s policies in this respect? What is his response?

Mr ANDREWS—I thank the member for Bonner for his question. I can confirm to him and to the House that the level of long-term unemployment—that is, people who have been unemployed for 12 months or longer—according to the latest Australian Bureau of Statistics data, has fallen to the lowest in more than 20 years. Indeed, in October, the number of long-term unemployed in Australia fell by 3,400, a 4.1 per cent fall. Since the introduction of Work Choices at the end of March of this year, we have seen a 17 per cent fall in the number of long-term unemployed in Australia and the figure now stands at just over 80,000 people.

Let me put this into context. According to the ABS, 10 years ago, when this government came to office, there were more than a quarter of a million more long-term unemployed than in October this year. I take just one example: in the Leader of the Opposition’s state of Western Australia the number of long-term unemployed has fallen to a low of just 3,500 people. The strong economic management of this government has seen real results for real Australians who have got jobs in their thousands because of these changes. Whilst it is a reality that those numbers have fallen quite substantially, it remains the case—and we are acutely aware of it—that there are still 80,000 Australians who have been unemployed for a year or more. That is why continuing to deliver a strong economy and continuing to look at the challenges that face Australia in the future and making the requisite reforms so that we can address and meet those challenges will be important to further bringing unemployment down. The contrast here could not be more stark. The opposition are inter-

ested in one job only; we are interested in jobs for all Australians.

Iraq

Mr McCLELLAND (3.00 pm)—My question is to the Prime Minister. Is the Prime Minister aware of further comments by decorated former SAS Iraq veteran Peter Tinley that we have been dragged into a civil war in Iraq and ‘we can never really see an end to it and we could never see a point in time where it would be okay to remove the Australian troops under the current Government’s ideas’? Hasn’t the government’s failed strategy put it in a hole in Iraq? Why won’t the Prime Minister listen to decorated Iraq veterans like the former SAS officer and simply stop digging?

Mr HOWARD—The view expressed by the former SAS officer Mr Tinley is a view that quite a lot of people in the community hold. I have never pretended otherwise. I have acknowledged from the very beginning that the decision to involve ourselves in Iraq was not a popular one, and I respect the fact that there are people in the military who are against it, just as there are many people in the military who are strongly in favour of it. I think what it represents is a range of views in the community. I respect his view. I do not denigrate it. I disagree with it.

Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme

Miss JACKIE KELLY (3.02 pm)—My question is addressed to the Minister for Health and Ageing. Would the minister advise the House how the government is strengthening the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme to provide life-saving medicines to patients and best value for taxpayers, particularly in my electorate of Lindsay?

Mr ABBOTT—I thank the member for Lindsay for her question, and I congratulate her on securing federal funding for a new after-hours GP clinic at Nepean Hospital which is opening next Monday. This is more good news from the Howard government for the people of Western Sydney.

The Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme is at the heart of Australia’s world-class health system. Since 1996, spending on the PBS has increased by some 148 per cent to over \$6 billion in the last financial year and has subsidised some 170 million prescriptions. Since August alone, new drugs worth \$250 million a year have been listed on the PBS. Historically, Australia has secured very competitive prices for new drugs, but we have been paying far too much for drugs that have come off patent. For instance, the cost to government of the cholesterol-lowering drug Simvastatin is over \$50 in Australia and it is less than \$10 in the United Kingdom.

Ten days ago the government announced changes which mean that we should be able to more readily secure new drugs by paying less for existing drugs, and

the price to government of many generic drugs will drop by 25 per cent in mid-2008. For about 200 existing drugs priced near or below the copayment, these changes are very important in securing the long-term sustainability of the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme. I would like to thank Medicines Australia and particularly the Pharmaceutical Guild for their constructive engagement with the government on this issue. I want to assure the House that this government remains absolutely determined to do whatever is necessary to make our already very good health system even better in the months and years ahead.

Iraq

Mr BEAZLEY (3.04 pm)—My question is to the Prime Minister. Why does the Prime Minister think former SAS officer Peter Tinley was wrong to say this morning that the Iraq war was founded on what we now know is spurious evidence—in fact, no evidence—and that the basis for war has changed and therefore we should leave?

Mr HOWARD—I have already dealt with the state of mind of the Leader of the Opposition at the time the coalition operation took place. But the issue that everybody now has to confront—including the Leader of the Opposition and the Deputy Leader of the Opposition and, indeed, anybody who is interested in this issue—is: what are the consequences of a precipitated coalition withdrawal?

Ms Macklin interjecting—

The SPEAKER—Order! The Deputy Leader of the Opposition is warned!

Mr HOWARD—Everybody has an obligation to think for themselves on this issue, including even the Deputy Leader of the Opposition. What you have to ask yourself is: if there is a precipitated withdrawal from the coalition, what are the consequences of that in the Middle East? This morning we have had our first really good news in five months in relation to Palestine and Israel. Hopefully, and I take this opportunity of saying to the House on behalf of the government, this represents a step forward that can be maintained. But if there is a coalition defeat in Iraq—and the opposition is really advocating a coalition defeat in Iraq—that will cause immense instability in the Middle East. It will embolden those in the Arab world who do not believe in making peace with Israel to maintain that position because they will know that continued opposition to America and the West is costless. That will lead to greater instability in the Middle East. The terrorists will be emboldened, and that will have consequences in our part of the world.

We can debate the situation of three years ago and, as I indicated in an earlier question, I am very happy to debate what was said three years ago. I have ample

evidence of what the Leader of the Opposition said three years ago, and I know his state of mind on weapons of mass destruction. The Leader of the Opposition was not relying on any advice we gave him, because he was not then on the front bench of the opposition. In his typical fashion, he was trying to be a guru—an expert—on this issue. He said there was not a defence department or foreign affairs department anywhere in the world that did not believe that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction; in other words, he was sitting on the fence. The Leader of the Opposition was hedging his bets so that, if everything had gone swimmingly, he could say, ‘Well, it was really that fellow over there’—the then Leader of the Opposition who implacably brought the Labor Party into opposition to what the government did—‘but what we are charged with now is understanding the consequences of the policy we now advocate.’ The Leader of the Opposition is for precipitate withdrawal that would destabilise the Middle East, that would embolden the terrorists and that would endanger Australia’s security in this part of the world. And that is why the government is opposed to it.

Australian History

Mr MICHAEL FERGUSON (3.08 pm)—My question is addressed to the Minister for Education, Science and Training. Has the minister seen reports today that 77 per cent of year 10 students do not know which historical event occurred on 26 January 1788? Minister, what is your response? What is the government doing to promote the teaching of Australian history?

Ms JULIE BISHOP—I thank the member for Bass for his question. I can confirm for him that recently an Australia-wide test on civics and citizenships was conducted of 20,000 Australian school students across 567 schools. I can also confirm to the member for Bass that only 23 per cent of year 10 students were able to identify a historical event that gives rise to Australia Day; in other words, 77 per cent of year 10 students were not able to state why we have a public holiday on Australia Day. They were not even able to hazard a guess. This is yet another example of the failure of state and territory governments in the running of their education systems.

Ms Macklin interjecting—

The SPEAKER—Order! The Deputy Leader of the Opposition has already been warned!

Ms Plibersek interjecting—

The SPEAKER—Order! The member for Sydney is warned!

Mr Kerr interjecting—

The SPEAKER—And so is the member for Denison!

Ms JULIE BISHOP—This highlights how the teaching of Australian history has been downgraded in

our schools. Let me put it in context. This morning, the New South Wales Labor Minister for Education and Training was asked about the teaching of Australian history. She was trumpeting the success of her government in teaching Australian history. She was asked why we celebrate Australia Day. She said:

Why do we celebrate Australia Day? Well, we celebrate Australia Day because that’s the—um—the day we became a nation, when the states joined together, the Federation of Australia. It’s an important day to understand that history.

Memo to the New South Wales Labor education minister: Australia Day commemorates 26 January 1788. Federation was on 1 January 1901.

Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER—Order! The minister will resume her seat. The member for Boothby is warned! The minister will be heard.

Ms JULIE BISHOP—The Australian government believes that all students, indeed all education ministers, should have a basic understanding of Australian history by the time they leave school. That is why we put Australian history on the national agenda with the convening of the Australian History Summit. The Howard government supports the recommendations of the Australian History Summit.

Mr Kerr interjecting—

The SPEAKER—Order! The minister will resume her seat. The member for Denison will remove himself under standing order 94(a).

The member for Denison then left the chamber.

Ms JULIE BISHOP—This is why the Howard government supports the recommendation of the Australian History Summit that the teaching of Australian history be a stand-alone subject. It should be mandatory in years 9 and 10. The Australian government calls on federal Labor to support the Howard government’s call for higher standards in our schools through greater national consistency. Specifically, we call on federal Labor to unequivocally support our call for Australian history to be a mandatory stand-alone subject across school curricula.

Mining

Mr WINDSOR (3.13 pm)—My question is to the Prime Minister and concerns another ‘coal’ inquiry. It relates to my question of 17 October 2006 regarding a possible National Water Initiative independent assessment of coal mining in high water-bearing aquifers on the rich black soils of the Liverpool Plains. Given the Prime Minister’s undertaking to do so, could the Prime Minister update the House on his inquiries on that issue? Further, Prime Minister, given that the black soils in question have potential under appropriate land use management to be a natural carbon sink, could you include the farm sector in the carbon task force recently announced?

Mr HOWARD—I think the member has asked me two questions. The first is whether I would include the farm sector in the task force recently announced. I will consider that. I will not promise on the run to do that, because it may be that by including the farm sector you may have to include others as well and, by extension, you end up with an unmanageably large group. I will consider what the member has put to me but bear in mind that the purpose of this joint task force is to look at the potential shape of a world emissions trading system. Whilst the farm sector has an interest in that, I do not think the interest is quite as great as the interest of, say, the resource sector. I will consider it, but I do not make any promises. In relation to your question of 17 October, I confess that, offhand, I do not have any further information. I will try to get some as quickly as possible and to provide it to you this afternoon if that is feasible.

Exports

Mr HAASE (3.15 pm)—My question is addressed to the Minister for Trade. Would the minister advise the House of recent developments in the government's pursuit of a better deal for Australia's exporters?

Mr TRUSS—I recognise that the honourable member for Kalgoorlie probably represents the biggest exporting electorate in the country. The critics on the other side of the chamber ought to acknowledge the fact that Kalgoorlie contributes enormously to our nation's export performance, particularly of resources. His real interest in this subject is quite obvious. Only a few weeks ago I visited a number of the facilities in his electorate and it is not possible but to be impressed by what is being achieved in Western Australia.

In this context, I welcome the recent announcement by the Director-General of the World Trade Organisation, Pascal Lamy, that officials should restart critical talks under the Doha Round. I met last week the chairs of many of the groups, and they are looking forward to getting back to work. Clearly, a lot of things need to be done to put together something that might be acceptable as a new round of international trade agreements, but at least we are back at work.

There are many key issues. The Americans need to do more in relation to their farm subsidies. The Europeans need to do more in relation to their exports, particularly their subsidies. The developing world also needs to do more to open its markets. But at least some discussions are going on, and it can only be hoped that this will lead to a fruitful outcome.

The Prime Minister and the other leaders at APEC made a very important contribution to the debate in Hanoi. In their leaders' statement, they called for an ambitious outcome to the round and urged all the partners in the negotiations to go beyond their current positions. I think that is a key element. The leaders at Hanoi indicated their willingness to go further and called

on other countries to do the same. It has to be that kind of spirit if there is going to be a successful outcome to the talks. Australia's own 'five plus five' proposal is the only constructive new idea on the table at the present time. That is also a key element in the discussions, but a lot more work needs to be done.

The fact that the discussions are underway again gives the lie to the honourable member for Griffith. In July, he put out a media statement saying that Doha was 'dead as a Dodo' and then went on to criticise the former Minister for Trade for being responsible for it all. So, once again, the statements of the honourable member for Griffith are coming back to haunt him. What I suspect that demonstrates to all Australians is that, if the Labor Party were ever given responsibility for trade policy, there would be no ambition, no desire, to do anything to help improve the lot of our exporters and to help build our nation's economy through stronger exports.

Nuclear Energy

Ms HOARE (3.18 pm)—My question is to the Prime Minister. Where will the Prime Minister's 25 nuclear reactors be sited and where will the nuclear waste dumps go?

Mr HOWARD—I do not have any nuclear power stations. But let me say this: I do have an open mind about the energy needs of Australia in the future. I believe in a confident Australian future. I believe that this nation needs an energy policy that includes every option that will preserve our wealth, continue our economic growth and protect our environment. I believe that the only way we can do that is to look at all of the options. I am not prepared to go backwards like the Leader of the Opposition. The Leader of the Opposition is a great one on going backwards. He wanted to go back on the GST. He wants to go back on workplace relations and he wants to go back on employment changes. My argument is a very simple argument—that is, if we care about a balanced future, about a sustainable future, we look at every option. We do not close our minds.

I am interested to know, of course, where the questioner comes from. She comes from one of the great coal-mining areas of Australia. I wonder whether she tells her constituents—those Labor members of the Newcastle council who voted to put a cap on the coal-mining industry of the Hunter—about the consequences for Australian industry of the policy being advocated by the member for Grayndler. She probably takes the member for Batman to the Hunter but she never takes the member for Grayndler to the Hunter. The great problem for her is that the man who is making the environmental policy for the Labor Party, the anti coal environment policy of the Labor Party—

Ms Hall interjecting—

The SPEAKER—The member for Shortland is warned!

Mr HOWARD—Labor is anti the coal industry. Labor wants to cripple the Australian coal industry. If you double the MRET targets or, worse than that, quadruple them, you are going to put a drain on Australian industry. You are going to make Australian industry less competitive, and that is going to hurt, not assist, the coal industry.

If I were the member who asked me the question, I would be getting up in caucus tomorrow and asking the Leader of the Opposition to disavow the anti coal sentiment of the member for Grayndler and to embrace the skilful, intelligent, far-sighted views of the member for Batman. He speaks common sense on these issues. He speaks for Australia's future. The rest of his party represent Australia's past. Mr Speaker, I ask that further questions be placed on the *Notice Paper*.

PERSONAL EXPLANATIONS

Mr BEAZLEY (Brand—Leader of the Opposition) (3.21 pm)—Mr Speaker, I wish to make a personal explanation.

The SPEAKER—Does the honourable Leader of the Opposition claim to have been misrepresented?

Mr BEAZLEY—Grievously, by the Prime Minister.

The SPEAKER—Please proceed.

Mr BEAZLEY—The Prime Minister in his remarks implied that somehow or other I did not oppose his commitment of Australian forces to the war in Iraq—

Mr Howard interjecting—

Mr BEAZLEY—You did. I absolutely opposed it at the time. All you need to do is take a look at the speeches. You got it wrong. You got it wrong then, and you misled all of us at the time.

The SPEAKER—Order! The Leader of the Opposition will resume his seat. The leader has made his point.

Mr HOWARD (Bennelong—Prime Minister) (3.22 pm)—Mr Speaker, I wish to make a personal explanation.

The SPEAKER—Does the honourable Prime Minister claim to have been misrepresented?

Mr HOWARD—Yes, by the Leader of the Opposition in what he has just said.

The SPEAKER—Please proceed.

Mr HOWARD—Mr Speaker, I quoted the words of the Leader of the Opposition in an article in the *Financial Review* of 7 February 2003. I quoted this, and I repeat it: 'No foreign office or defence department official anywhere on the globe entertains the view that Iraq does not have weapons of mass destruction.' The Leader of the Opposition was a blatant opportunistic

fence-sitter on this issue, and he has now been caught out.

The SPEAKER—The Prime Minister will resume his seat. He has made his point.

Mr BEAZLEY (Brand—Leader of the Opposition) (3.23 pm)—Mr Speaker, I wish to make a personal explanation.

The SPEAKER—In asking whether the Leader of the Opposition claims to have been misrepresented—

Mr BEAZLEY—I certainly have, Mr Speaker.

The SPEAKER—I will hear him, but we are not going to have a debate.

Mr BEAZLEY—I have been misrepresented yet again by the Prime Minister.

The SPEAKER—Please proceed.

Mr BEAZLEY—Mr Speaker, he implies again that I did not oppose that war. I did. I opposed it absolutely. Irrespective of whether or not you believe that there were weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, it was a stupid decision by him and—

The SPEAKER—The leader will resume his seat.

Ms GILLARD (Lalor) (3.23 pm)—Mr Speaker, I wish to make a personal explanation.

The SPEAKER—Does the honourable Manager of Opposition Business claim to have been misrepresented?

Ms GILLARD—Yes, I do.

The SPEAKER—Please proceed.

Ms GILLARD—In question time today, the Treasurer stated that I did not support the Victoria Police in their actions against G20 protesters. This is wholly untrue. What I do not support is the Treasurer coming into this place and using the police as a tool for his cheap political stunts.

Mr Pyne interjecting—

The SPEAKER—Order! The member for Sturt is warned!

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler) (3.24 pm)—Mr Speaker, I wish to make a personal explanation.

The SPEAKER—Does the honourable member claim to have been misrepresented?

Mr ALBANESE—Yes, I do, on two counts.

The SPEAKER—Please proceed.

Mr ALBANESE—One count was the Prime Minister suggesting that somehow I did not support clean coal technology. If he cares to check my website, he will see at least 73 speeches and press releases referring to support for clean coal technology, including me as the major speaker at the clean coal conference, where the government did not bother to have a representative.

The SPEAKER—Order! The member has made his point. The member will come to his second point.

Mr ALBANESE—The second point is that the Prime Minister also said I would not be present in Hunter seats. I indeed have visited the electorate of Charlton with the member for Charlton on a number of occasions. On 24 September, I addressed a forum in the electorate of Shortland at Swansea RSL. On 25 September, I addressed a breakfast with the member for Newcastle, Sharon Grierson, and then we attended the CSIRO centre to talk with the CSIRO centre about solar technology and clean coal technologies, and I did a number of media events over that two-day visit.

The SPEAKER—The member has made his point. The member will resume his seat.

QUESTIONS TO THE SPEAKER

Parliament House: Visitors Passes

Mr TANNER (3.25 pm)—Mr Speaker, I have a question to you. My question regards visitors passes. The recent tightening of the eligibility for unescorted visitors passes has had a negative impact on particular groups of people who conduct mass lobbying exercises. I think particularly of Science Meets Parliament and also the efforts of the council of humanities and social studies, where they have large numbers of people coming to parliament and talking to many—if not all—members of parliament. I understand that the two things that have effectively changed as a result of these people being required to have escorted passes are, firstly, that they have to be escorted by a staff member or an MP from one office to another and, secondly, that in breaks between appointments with individual members they are required to go back to a committee room as a kind of home base.

I do not particularly have a problem with the second of those, but I do think it is a bit unreasonable for organisations of this kind to not be able to go from my office to another office down the corridor, for example, between two consecutive appointments without one of my staff members actually walking with them. So I am just wondering whether you could examine this issue and see whether there is a middle ground that could be applied with respect to what is ultimately going to be a very small number of instances where you have now well-established and, I would argue, very positive efforts that enhance the parliament as well as the interests of those organisations in lobbying members of parliament.

The SPEAKER—I thank the member for Melbourne, and I appreciate the spirit in which he raises that question. I will look closely at the points he raised and get back to him as appropriate.

Questions in Writing

Mr MURPHY (3.27 pm)—I just request a modicum of assistance under standing order 105(b), Mr

Speaker. On question No. 3997 of 4 September to the Prime Minister—and I am sure that, if he read the *Australian* on Saturday, he would give me an answer—question No. 4083 of 5 September, question No. 4170 of 7 September, questions Nos 4334 and 4335 of 12 September and also questions Nos 4686 and 4687 of 14 September, I would be grateful if you would write to the Prime Minister and the ministers and seek reasons for the delay in replying to those questions, particularly to the first one I mentioned, the question to the Prime Minister.

The SPEAKER—I thank the member for Lowe, and I will follow up his request.

PERSONAL EXPLANATIONS

Mr McMULLAN (Fraser) (3.28 pm)—Mr Speaker, I wish to make a personal explanation.

The SPEAKER—Does the honourable member claim to have been misrepresented?

Mr McMULLAN—Yes, Mr Speaker, on more occasions than I can deal with here.

The SPEAKER—Please proceed.

Mr McMULLAN—During the course of last week, an interview which I gave to the *Canberra Times* on 19 November, which was published on 20 November, was subsequently exaggerated and distorted by numerous media outlets, none of which got any comment from me to justify the exaggeration or distortion. The two extreme cases that I wish to repudiate by way of personal explanation today are those in the *Australian* of 21 November, which said I was a public advocate for leadership change, and one on 22 November in the same newspaper, which said I questioned Mr Beazley's leadership this week. Both those statements are complete fabrications made without any attempt to contact me to verify them.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Report of the Inquiry into certain Australian companies in relation to the UN Oil-for-Food Programme

Mr RUDDOCK (Berowra—Attorney-General) (3.29 pm)—I ask leave of the House to make a ministerial statement relating to the *Report of the inquiry into certain Australian companies in relation to the UN oil for food program*.

Leave granted.

Mr RUDDOCK—I thank the House. Just over one year ago, after a request by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the Australian government moved decisively to set up an open, transparent and independent public inquiry with royal commission powers. Its task was to look into the conduct of the Australian companies identified in the Volcker report, the UN committee report which unveiled corruption throughout the UN oil for food program involving 2,200 com-

panies from 66 countries while Saddam Hussein was in power.

No other country has undertaken such an open and far-reaching inquiry. As Commissioner Cole states in the prologue to the report:

AWB has cast a shadow over Australia's reputation in international trade. That shadow has been removed by Australia's intolerance of inappropriate conduct in trade, demonstrated by shining the bright light of this independent public Inquiry on AWB's conduct.

Like Commissioner Cole, government is disappointed that a major Australian company could be involved in such appropriate conduct. Australia does not tolerate corruption here or by Australian companies in other parts of the world.

We have acted to get to the bottom of this matter. I am pleased to table the report of Commissioner Cole and, on behalf of the government, to thank him, his legal team and the inquiry staff for conducting the most rigorous, independent and transparent inquiry in the world into matters arising from the Volcker report.

Commissioner Cole's independence under his letters patent has been clear beyond doubt. As even the Leader of the Opposition said in February:

We're not worried about Cole. We're not worried about his independence or his willingness to inquire ...

On this issue alone, the Leader of the Opposition has been proven correct. Commissioner Cole and those assisting him have done an outstanding job in very difficult circumstances. He has worked tirelessly through 76 days of hearings, hundreds of witness statements and tens of thousands of pages of documents.

Getting to the bottom of this matter has not been an easy task; it has taken Commissioner Cole's inquiry a year. This followed the lengthy Volcker inquiry, which itself relied on the fall of Saddam Hussein 3½ years ago, giving access to Iraqi government documents for the first time.

The Australian government was proactive in facilitating those two inquiries. It has done all it can to assist Commissioner Cole to get to the heart of the matter. When the commissioner asked for resources, we provided them. When the commissioner requested changes to the terms of reference, we provided them—on five separate occasions.

Much has been claimed about the supposed inadequacy of the terms of reference. I reject any claim that Commissioner Cole has been hampered in his important task. As Commissioner Cole himself notes in his report at paragraphs 6.26 and 6.27:

I closely examined the role of the Commonwealth, and particularly that of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, in relation to the operation of the Oil-for-Food Programme, with particular emphasis on the Department's role in the export of wheat to Iraq by AWB during the programme.

He goes on:

I found no material that is in any way suggestive of illegal activity by the Commonwealth or any of its officers. There was thus no basis for my seeking any widening of the terms of reference in that respect.

The Cole inquiry has been a landmark inquiry in terms of the government's openness to forensic examination of its internal processes. That examination has extended far beyond government departments to ministers and their offices and to intelligence agencies.

Three senior ministers, including the Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister, gave evidence and were examined by the inquiry. A fourth minister and a former minister also provided sworn statements.

The report being tabled today finds that there is no basis for doubting the evidence provided by the Prime Minister or other current and former ministers. Commissioner Cole found in his report, at paragraph 30.241:

There is no evidence that any of the Prime Minister, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, the Minister for Trade or the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry were ever informed about, or otherwise acquired knowledge of, the relevant activities of AWB.

Furthermore, the commissioner found that there was no evidence to support an inference that the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade had turned a blind eye to the allegations.

Tabling this report is not an end to the process. Just as the Australian government acted quickly and resolutely to establish a royal commission after the Volcker report, the government will be moving quickly now it has the report.

Commissioner Cole sets out a range of findings in relation to possible breaches of Australian law by AWB and certain former employees.

As recommended, the government will establish a task force of relevant Australian government agencies to consider possible prosecutions in consultation with the Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions. The Prime Minister is writing to the Victorian Premier to invite the participation of the Victoria Police and the Victorian Director of Public Prosecutions in this process.

In addition, the government will introduce legislation and seek its passage in this sitting fortnight to facilitate access by the task force to the many documents held by the Cole commission. This will also help responses to future commissions.

Commissioner Cole has also recommended a number of changes designed to strengthen Australian law, in particular in relation to the domestic enforcement of UN sanctions and the conduct of future royal commissions. The government will move speedily to consider Commissioner Cole's recommendations.

I would like to add a word of caution. Although the government is moving quickly and decisively, it may take time for the independent agencies involved in the task force to thoroughly consider all of the relevant material before commencing any prosecution.

This is appropriate. Government agencies should only take actions to investigate and prosecute citizens or companies when they have a proper basis for doing so. Thanks to Commissioner Cole's inquiry, we now have a basis for making proper, informed decisions about whether persons or companies can and should be prosecuted for possible breaches of Australian law.

Again, the government thanks Commissioner Cole and his team and the legal inquiry staff for this thorough and important report. I present the following document:

Report of the Inquiry into certain Australian companies in relation to the UN Oil-for-Food Programme—Ministerial Statement, 27 November 2006.

Mr McGAURAN (Gippsland—Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry) (3.37 pm)—I move:

That the House take note of the documents.

I seek leave to move a motion in relation to the debate.

Leave granted.

Mr McGAURAN (Gippsland—Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry) (3.38 pm)—I move:

That so much of the standing and sessional orders be suspended as would prevent the honourable the Leader of the Opposition speaking for a period not exceeding 8 minutes.

Question agreed to.

Mr BEAZLEY (Brand—Leader of the Opposition) (3.38 pm)—This is a shameless government. Its members are here saying with pride and boasting to us: 'We were not criminally culpable. We were merely incompetent and negligent.' They were incompetent and negligent in the face of the worst federal scandal in living memory, in which \$300 million went to the back kick of Saddam Hussein on their watch—\$300 million subsequently turned by Saddam Hussein into war-making capacities and then used on Australian soldiers and others immediately after that.

They scuttle away from the accountability that they should have allowed themselves to be subject to in the terms of reference that went to Mr Cole. As was pointed out repeatedly by the commissioner in correspondence with us, there was no capacity for the royal commissioner to find as to the stewardship of these ministers for the responsibilities they had—critical responsibilities that impacted not only on Australian honour and Australian wheat farmers but also on the position of our allies and the soldiers of both our allies and others domestically in Iraq, who have found themselves having to confront the consequences of that money flowing through Saddam Hussein ultimately, in all probability, to at least one part of an insurgency.

However, the government should look at this finding with pride. It shows us how low public standards have sunk in this country; how low public accountability has fallen in this country under this appalling government. This cynical government deceived the Australian people about why it took us to war in Iraq. This negligent government allowed 300 million Aussie dollars to go in bribes to Saddam Hussein—the very dictator it sent our troops to fight. This tricky government tricked up an inquiry to get its ministers off the hook. And now this arrogant government is going to the Australian people and saying, 'It is not our fault.'

Not even the rorted terms of reference that this commission had can cover up the facts of the wheat for weapons scandal. Firstly, Australia's monopoly wheat exporters bribed the Saddam regime to buy Australian wheat. Secondly, Alexander Downer and Mark Vaile's department approved the contracts that contained the bribes. Thirdly, the government was warned 35 times about the bribes, whether it chose to regard those warnings as well based or not. Fourthly, the ministers chose to ignore those warnings. Fifthly, having chosen to ignore those warnings of sanctions busting, Mr Howard then told us we had to go to war because sanctions on Iraq had failed. That was his reason for going to war in Iraq—the wrong war. But, when our brave troops got to Iraq, the bullets fired at them had been paid for by the Australian government. In the final disgrace, the government rorted the terms of reference of the royal commission supposed to investigate all of this.

I want to place this not simply in the context of the argy-bargy of Australian political debate. One thing that is not noted by many Australians but is noted by me since largely they are deployed from my electorate and occasionally from Sydney is that, while all this was going on—as the Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Minister for Trade were not doing their job ensuring that the sanctions regime was being properly applied in relation to the activities of the AWB; and, whether they were being actively being misled or not, they were not doing their job—young Australian men and women were enforcing sanctions in the gulf at risk to their lives. For years and years—all through these years—young men and women were enforcing sanctions, doing their job.

Contrast the actions of Australian service personnel with the worthlessness of their political masters who sent them there and then cynically refused to put themselves anywhere near a serious inquiry during all those years of this area of sanction busting which should have sent red lights flashing in the minds of every Australian minister as it set them flashing in the minds of ministers when we were in office. Take Gareth Evans. The fact that AWB may have shamelessly misled all those who made inquiries of it does not excuse this government. The best you can say from the evidence

that was presented to the Cole commission is that their efforts at inquiry were ‘once over very lightly’.

But they cannot stop misleading. It comes to them so naturally. We got more of it again in the Attorney-General’s statement here today. Let me identify one part of that:

The Australian government was proactive in facilitating those two inquiries.

Proactive in facilitating the Volcker inquiry, was it? Let me quote from the opinion of Mr Volcker on how proactive the Australian government was. On 7 February 2005 the Australian Ambassador to the UN met with Mr Volcker, the head of the UN inquiry. Volcker was blunt in his assessment of Australia’s lack of cooperation with the inquiry, saying the IIC—that is, his inquiry—had encountered a problem with Australia’s cooperation. Australia, he said, had been ‘beyond reticent, even forbidding’ in responding to the committee’s requests. Volcker also told the ambassador there was strong evidence the AWB had been involved in the payment of kickbacks, and he reiterated his request for Australian documents.

And then we have the evidence of 2 June, recorded in the handwritten notes of the AWB executive. He had the Prime Minister’s office—this cooperative, collaborative government with the Volker inquiry—assisting them with the preparation of evidence. He says the PM’s office official:

... was most probative, but at the end of the meeting he was a supporter. Keep your responses narrow, technical. Do not blame US, complain about process. AWB’s strategy would be the same witting or unwitting outcome. What the government wants from the AWB says the Prime Minister’s office is to keep narrow; be a small target.

That is the Attorney-General’s view of what enthusiastic collaboration amounts to in relation to the Volker inquiry. It is no wonder that a government which had that attitude on that occasion to the Volker inquiry should have a similar attitude in making absolutely certain that the Cole royal commission was not clothed with the full powers to ensure that it could inquire into the negligent behaviour of ministers in administering their portfolio in that area. And, because they did not do so, whatever value there may be in this inquiry—and it will be very valuable indeed in relation to the criminal culpability of officials of AWB—as a statement of the political overview of how administration was conducted in this country, it cannot be effective because it was not properly empowered. It simply was not properly empowered, and for that the government stands condemned. In no state government in this country would those two ministers—Mr Downer and the trade minister—have survived their culpability in this regard. (*Time expired*)

Debate adjourned.

MAIN COMMITTEE

Report of the Inquiry into certain Australian companies in relation to the UN Oil-for-Food Programme

Reference

Mr TURNBULL (Wentworth—Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister) (3.46 pm)—by leave—I move:

That the resumption of debate on the motion to take note of the report of the inquiry into certain Australian companies in relation to the UN oil for food program and the Attorney-General’s statement on the report be referred to the Main Committee for debate.

Question agreed to.

PETITIONS

The Clerk—Petitions have been lodged for presentation as follows and copies will be referred to the appropriate ministers:

Veteran Carers

To the Honourable the Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives Assembled in Parliament:

The petition of concerned citizens of Australia draws to the attention of the House the fact that Carers of disabled veterans take care of their veteran 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, every week of the year. For their dedicated work, these carers receive the sum of \$6.76 per day Carers’ Allowance. As a consequence of the heavy work involved in the caring process, Carers find themselves suffering physical disabilities and depression and often need similar care to that which they are giving to disabled veterans.

Your petitioners therefore request the House to:

- Administer and pay Carers’ Allowance to Carers of Veterans through the Department of Veterans’ Affairs.
- Provide a health programme for carers of Veterans to cover all aspects of their well being.
- Provide transport assistance to veteran’s Carers for their return home when the veteran does not return with them.
- Provide relief from parking fees for Carers when visiting hospitalised Veterans.
- Subsidize accommodation to enable the carers to stay nearby the Veteran if their Veteran is hospitalized away from their home town.
- Increase the amount of respite available to Carers of disabled Veterans.
- Remove the abolition of the Carer’s Allowance which ceases after a period of six weeks if the Carer’s veteran is required to stay in care outside of his home.

by **Mr Billson** (from 9,505 citizens)

Organ Harvesting

To the Honourable The Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives Assembled in Parliament:

The petition of certain citizens and residents of Australia draws to the attention of the House that:

A Canadian report released on 6 July 2006 came to the conclusion that China has been committing crimes against hu-

manity, that the authorities have been harvesting vital organs from thousands of unwilling Falun Gong practitioners and killing them in the process. Mr David Kilgour, a former Canadian MP and Secretary of State for Asia Pacific, and international human rights lawyer Mr David Matas initiated an independent investigation into the allegations of organ harvesting from live victims.

“We have concluded that the government of China and its agencies in numerous parts of the country, in particular hospitals but also detention centres and ‘people’s courts’, since 1999 have put to death a large but unknown number of Falun Gong prisoners of conscience. Their vital organs, including hearts, kidneys, livers and corneas, were virtually simultaneously seized involuntarily for sale at high prices, sometimes to foreigners, who normally face long waits for voluntary donations of such organs in their home countries.”—Pg. 44 of the report.

YOUR PETITIONERS THEREFORE REQUEST THE HOUSE TO INITIATE A RESOLUTION TO:

- I. Urge the CCP to unconditionally release all Falun Gong practitioners and give full access to jails, labour camps, detention centres and related hospitals for the Coalition to Investigate Persecution of Falun Gong in China (CIPFG) and/or the UN to conduct independent investigations;
- II. Establish a Senate Committee Inquiry into the allegation of Organ Harvesting;
- III. Discourage Australian citizens from travelling to China for organ transplants; and prevent companies, institutions and individuals providing goods and services and training to China’s organ transplant programs until such time as it is beyond reasonable doubt that no organs used have been harvested against the will of the donor.

by **Ms Burke** (from 34 citizens)

Superannuation: Same Sex Couples

To the Honourable the Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives assembled in Parliament:

We, the undersigned, draw the attention of the House to the discrimination experienced by same sex couples in the provision of many government benefits, including superannuation and veterans’ entitlements.

Prime Minister, John Howard was quoted in the Sydney Star Observer as saying that he was ‘strongly in favour ... of removing any property and other discrimination that exists against people who have same-sex relationships’.

Your petitioners therefore ask the House to urgently rectify the situation, by recognising same-sex couples, and eliminating government discrimination on the basis of sexual preference.

And your petitioners, as is duty bound, will ever pray.

by **Mr Danby** (from 74 citizens)

Workplace Relations

To the Hon Speaker of the House and Members of the House assembled in Parliament:

The petition of certain citizens of Australia draws the attention of the House to the fact that:

WE BELIEVE that Australians should have basic rights at work, including decent minimum wages and awards condi-

tions, protection from unfair dismissal and the right to reject AWA individual contracts and negotiate collectively with their employer.

WE OPPOSE the Howard Government’s plans to:

- Remove employment conditions from awards.
- Change the way minimum wages are set to make them lower.
- Use individual contracts to undercut existing rights and conditions.
- Keep unions out of workplaces and reduce workers’ negotiating and bargaining rights.
- Abolish redundancy pay and protection from unfair dismissals for the 3 million people who work in small businesses.
- Reduce the powers of the independent Industrial Relations Commission to settle disputes and set fair minimum standards at work.
- Take away rights at work with laws that unilaterally override and weaken State industrial relations systems, awards and agreements.
- And we, your petitioners, ask the House to ensure that the Government upholds Australians’ rights at work and does not implement these plans that we oppose.

by **Mr Danby** (from 15 citizens)

Whaling

To the Honourable the Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives assembled in Parliament:

Certain citizens of Australia draw to the attention of the House:

The Howard Government’s failure to protect the whale population in Australian waters despite laws passed by the Parliament in 1999 which gave it the power to do so.

Your petitioners therefore request the House to call on the Howard Government to:

- (1) Take all steps to prevent an increase in Japan’s “scientific research” quota through the International Whaling Commission.
- (2) Take all necessary legal steps to enforce Australian laws creating an Australian Whale Sanctuary in the Southern Ocean and making it an offence to kill or injure whales in Australian waters.
- (3) Challenge the legality of Japan’s abuse of the “scientific research” exemption to the ban on commercial whaling by taking a case to the International Court of Justice.

by **Mr Edwards** (from 69 citizens)

Nuclear Reactors

To the Honourable the Speaker and the Members of the House of Representatives assembled in Parliament.

This petition of citizens of Australia calls on the Parliament to urge Government members to:

- (1) Table all environmental evidence and other studies supporting the proposal to build a nuclear reactor in Western Australia;
- (2) Identify which bodies in Western Australia have been consulted over such a proposal;

- (3) Advise on what consultation has taken place with the community in Western Australia over the proposal;
- (4) Identify all the sites in Western Australia under consideration for the construction of this nuclear reactor; and
- (5) Advise what safeguards will be put in place to prevent terrorist attacks against nuclear facilities in Western Australia.

by **Mr Edwards** (from 83 citizens)

Medibank Private

To the Honourable Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives assembled in Parliament to oppose the sale of Medibank Private:

This petition of certain citizens of Australia registers its protest to the sale of Medibank Private and calls on the House to oppose the sale of Medibank Private.

by **Mr Edwards** (from 30 citizens)

Human Rights: Papua

To the Honourable the Speaker and the Members of the House of Representatives assembled in Parliament.

The petition of certain citizens of Australia draws to the attention of the House credible reports of longstanding and significant violence, intimidation and other human rights abuses committed by elements of the Indonesian military against the people of the province of Papua.

Your petitioners therefore request the House to take urgent action to encourage the Indonesian Government to put an end to these abuses and to restore the human dignity and rights of the people of Papua.

by **Mr Somlyay** (from 217 citizens)

La Trobe University

To the Honourable the Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives assembled in Parliament.

The petition of certain citizens of Australia draws to the attention of the House that the Federal Government has committed 1.5 million dollars to La Trobe University in order for it to establish a stand-alone campus in Shepparton. Recently La Trobe University announced that it is reviewing its regional operations. It has called for submissions to this review by October 6th 2006. Pending this review, the planned campus has been placed on hold.

Your petitioners therefore request the House ensure that the said 1.5 million dollars committed by the Federal Government remain allocated to the Shepparton region. This funding should remain in order for a university campus to be established in Shepparton should La Trobe University decide to abort a stand-alone campus in the Shepparton region. Your petitioners also request that all HECS places that are currently provided to La Trobe University at its Shepparton campus will remain allocated to the Shepparton region should La Trobe University decide to remove its presence from Shepparton.

by **Dr Stone** (from 1,821 citizens)

Human Rights: Falun Gong

To the Honourable The Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives Assembled in Parliament:

The petition of certain citizens and residents of Australia draws to the attention of the House that:

Witnesses, including an investigative journalist and a veteran military doctor have revealed that Falun Gong practitioners are being held in at least 36 concentration camps in China where they are routinely subject to the forced removals of their organs which are then sold for transplants. The bodies are quickly cremated to destroy all evidence.

YOUR PETITIONERS THEREFORE REQUEST THE HOUSE TO INITIATE A RESOLUTION TO:

- I. Call for the Australian Government to fully support the International Coalition to Investigate the Persecution of Falun Gong (CIPFG), and demand that the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) immediately open the doors of all concentration camps, forced labour camps, hospitals, prisons and detention centres throughout the People's Republic of China in order to allow independent teams to investigate the charges of illegal detention, torture and live organ removal for transplants.
- II. Demand that the CCP regime release all detained Falun Gong practitioners immediately.

by **Mr Tanner** (from 199 citizens)

Australia Post: Office

To the Honourable The Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives Assembled in Parliament:

The petition of certain electors of the Division of Blair draws to the attention of the House that there is no Australia Post office in Schulte's Central shopping complex located at Mainland, Qld, 4341. Efforts to lobby Australia Post to establish a post office have spanned four years and the significant new retail and residential developments in the area warrant the service.

Your petitioners therefore request the House to assist in every possible manner so that the establishment of a post office by Australia Post eventuates.

by **Mr Cameron Thompson** (from 1,220 citizens)

Petitions received.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Eating Disorders

Ms BURKE (Chisholm) (3.49 pm)—I move:

That the House:

- (1) notes that:
 - (a) eating disorders—*anorexia nervosa*, *bulimia nervosa*, binge eating disorder and related disorders—are not illnesses of choice, but rather life-threatening mental disorders;
 - (b) *anorexia* is the third most prevalent chronic illness in adolescent girls after obesity and asthma and has one of the highest mortality rates of any psychiatric disorder;
 - (c) one in 20 Australian women has admitted to having suffered an eating disorder; and
- (2) expresses serious concern about recent reports that eating disorders are on the increase, especially among school-aged children;
- (3) condemns the lack of government funding for the prevention and treatment of eating disorders; and
- (4) urges the Government to:

- (a) convene a national summit on body image to develop a national code of conduct to ensure the media, fashion industry and advertisers portray a healthy and diverse range of men and women; and
- (b) become a signatory to the Worldwide Charter for Action on Eating Disorders, which calls on those responsible for policy to educate and inform the community with programs that:
 - (i) de-stigmatise eating disorders and raise awareness of the causes of eating disorders;
 - (ii) increase public awareness of the signs and symptoms of eating disorders;
 - (iii) make available comprehensive information about eating disorder services and resources;
 - (iv) connect with the media to provide accurate information on eating disorders and to help shift the culture's perspective on body image issues and weight and food issues;
 - (v) develop and implement effective prevention programs targeting schools and universities;
 - (vi) educate and train health care practitioners at all levels in the recognition and treatment of eating disorders to improve the quality of care;
 - (vii) provide sufficient specialist services based on regional need;
 - (viii) provide people with access to fully-funded, specialised treatment and care; and
 - (ix) fund research into eating disorders.

There has been much talk in this chamber over recent months about the obesity crisis. It is important that we do discuss obesity, but sadly the flipside of that issue—that is, eating disorders—has been largely ignored. I would venture it has been irresponsible of the government to focus on one problem without considering the other. It is ironic, but medical professionals are now claiming that national focus on obesity has exacerbated the problem of eating disorders. An article in yesterday's *Sun-Herald* revealed that five-year-old children are now being diagnosed with anorexia and that since 2001 there has been a 20 per cent increase in under-18s being hospitalised at the Children's Hospital at Westmead, New South Wales, as a result of anorexia.

Anorexia is the third most prevalent chronic illness in adolescent females in Australia, after obesity and asthma. One in 20 Australian women has admitted to having suffered from an eating disorder. Of course, males too are affected by eating disorders: around 25 per cent of anorexic children are boys. While the federal government has boosted funding for obesity, there is an absence of funding for the prevention and treating of eating disorders. So it is vital that we put eating disorders on the national agenda and start tackling this deadly problem before the situation gets worse.

In August this year I wrote to the Minister for Health and Ageing about the need for increased funding for the prevention and treatment of eating disorders. The

minister did not respond; instead I received a letter from his parliamentary secretary. He wrote:

In Australia, the direct provision and regulation of public mental health services ... is the responsibility of the State and Territory Governments.

Eating disorders know no boundaries, and passing the buck will not help Australians who are battling illnesses such as anorexia and bulimia. It will not do anything to help a brave young constituent in my electorate, Sarah Ralph, who has been fighting her eating disorder for over seven years.

I was also disappointed the minister for health ignored another letter I sent him this year in which I urged him to convene a national forum on body image and eating disorders. Although the media and fashion industries often deny they play a role in the development of eating disorders, medical professionals say otherwise. Yes, a lot of factors contribute to the onset of illnesses such as anorexia and bulimia. One medical resource for doctors treating patients with eating disorders states:

Eating disorders are a complex interplay of biopsychosocial factors, including development issues, relationship and family factors, life events, biological vulnerability and socio-cultural influences.

But the growing pressure on young men and woman to look a certain way, usually stick thin, is undoubtedly taking its toll—increasingly on school aged children. Dr Rick Kausman of the Australian Medical Association says:

I think there is increasing pressure on kids to grow up much sooner than what might be best for them, and I also think we've got caught up in a culture where the way we look is all important, even from a very young age ...

So reports that primary school children are wishing they were skinnier and going on starvation diets should not be ignored, especially when, according to a British medical journal, dieting is the greatest risk factor for the development of an eating disorder. There is an urgent need for the government to draw together various bodies, including the media, the fashion industry, advertisers, and health and education professionals, to develop a national code of conduct on body image to ensure that young Australians grow up with healthy and diverse role models. We need to encourage our children to grow up loving themselves—not despising themselves because they do not look a certain way. Although the Parliamentary Secretary for Health and Ageing responded to my letter, he refused to commit to my proposal for a national forum.

Today I also want to voice my support for the Worldwide Charter for Action on Eating Disorders. The charter was developed by the Academy for Eating Disorders and various other international eating disorder organisations in response to the unmet needs of those living with an eating disorder. It establishes a set

of rights for those living with eating disorders and their carers, including the right to communicate with health professionals; the right to comprehensive assessment and treatment planning; the right to accessible, high-quality, fully funded, specialised care; the right to respectful, fully informed, age appropriate, safe levels of care; the right of carers to be informed, valued and respected as a treatment resource; and the right of carers to accessible, appropriate support and education resources.

I hope that Australia will become a signatory to this charter, because at present too many people suffering from eating disorders are not getting the most appropriate treatment for their individual needs. There is a lot of misunderstanding about eating disorders. Many people believe that eating disorders are an illness of choice or a silly phase that teenagers go through. These myths need to be dispelled. Anorexia has the highest mortality rate of any psychiatric illness. I call on the Howard government to stop ignoring the growing trend of eating disorders. We need to take action against these illnesses. It is a matter of life and death.

I want to put on record my thanks to Sarah Ralph, a constituent of mine, for bringing this serious issue to my attention and for her brave efforts in coming up to Canberra and speaking about her own situation. It caused her a great deal of pain and suffering to actually come on that day. She was sacked from her job and actually went backwards in her own treatment program. I want to thank Sarah very much for raising awareness about this issue. (*Time expired*)

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Lindsay)—Is the motion seconded?

Ms Kate Ellis—I second the motion and reserve my right to speak.

Dr WASHER (Moore) (3.54 pm)—I thank the member for Chisholm for bringing this important issue to the attention of the House. Eating disorders are psychological disorders where dieting and eating behaviours are severely disturbed and become the focus of one's life. The most widely recognised disorders are anorexia nervosa and bulimia nervosa. Anorexia is hallmarked by an extreme reluctance to consume food as a result of a psychological disturbed body image. This may lead to extreme malnutrition and weight loss, which may become potentially life threatening. The incidence of the disease is around one to two per cent among schoolgirls and university students and is ten times more common in women. Suicide has been reported in two to five per cent of patients with chronic anorexia nervosa and the mortality rate per year is around 0.5 per cent. Fifty per cent of sufferers make a full recovery, 30 per cent a partial recovery and, sadly, 20 per cent do not recover.

Unfortunately drug treatment has had limited success except to symptomatically treat insomnia and de-

pressive illness. Bulimia is characterised by episodic, uncontrolled and impulsive binge eating followed by self-induced vomiting or consumption of laxatives or purgatives to avoid the weight gain associated with such behaviour. Like anorexia, bulimia is a condition ten times more common in women than men; the usual onset is between of 16 to 18 years of age. Any given woman has a one to four per cent chance of developing this condition throughout her lifetime. Prognosis for bulimia is better than for anorexia, with approximately 60 per cent of patients recovering with appropriate treatment.

There are a few predisposing factors for the development of eating disorders. The main risk factor seems to be a family history of psychiatric illness or a coexisting psychiatric problem. Whether this trend represents a genetic or environmental link is not entirely known. The incidence of eating disorders may be increasing. However, it may also be due to better recognition and detection of these diseases. Figures produced by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare on the annual numbers of hospital episodes associated with eating disorders show that there was a decline of 19.8 per cent for anorexia and a 20.7 per cent decline for bulimia between 1998 and 2005. These figures can give an indication of the severity or degree of eating disorders over time for which hospitalisation is required.

Even though the responsibility of provision and regulation for mental health services lies with the state and territory governments, the Australian government has played a significant role through the Mental Health Strategy. The last budget included \$1.9 billion in new funding to further improve services for people with a mental illness, their families and carers. Importantly, for those who are suffering from eating disorders, this included \$538 million for the Better Access to Psychiatrists, Psychologists and GPs through the Medicare Benefits Schedule initiative. This initiative enables GPs to provide early intervention and assessment of patients with mental disorders. Early intervention is critical to successfully treating eating disorders. The earlier it is recognized, the greater the chance of recovery.

In addition, the Australian government has awarded \$2.25 million in the last six years for research investigating eating disorders and people support schemes. The Worldwide Charter for Action on Eating Disorders is a document that has been prepared by the Academy for Eating Disorders. Signatories include individuals and organisations, not countries, and the charter has no legal standing in relation to a nation's obligations. It is a well-intended document that is designed to make people and organisations more aware of the disease and the help that sufferers and families need. The government know how debilitating this illness is for those

who suffer from it and the families and friends who suffer alongside them. We take this disease, like all mental illness, very seriously and will continue to fund research and support in this area.

Ms HALL (Shortland) (3.59 pm)—I would like to congratulate the member for Chisholm for bringing this very important motion to the House today. Eating disorders develop around body image. Body image refers to a person's perception of their body as well as their emotions and attitudes towards it, which can be positive or negative. Many Australian women—and, to a lesser extent, men—have a negative body image. This is closely linked to how a person feels about themselves and their quality of life. Poor body image has been found to be related to feelings of depression and engagement in unhealthy eating practices. Influences on a person's body image include the way men's and women's bodies are portrayed in the media via unrealistic images of beauty and emphasis on dieting, modelling by parents, childhood teasing and stigmatisation of overweight and obesity problems, amongst other things.

Body image is a serious clinical issue, as perceiving oneself as fat is one of the criteria for anorexia nervosa and other eating disorders. Anorexia nervosa is an eating disorder which has been shown to impact on both men and women's behaviour as well as the behaviour of children. It is known that children as young as seven—or even five, as stated by the member for Chisholm—can have body image disturbances leading to the development of eating disorders. In particular, when girls reach puberty it can have an emphasis on body image. Some girls are proud of their womanly shape, while others do all they can to try to stop this natural process by covering up their curves and undertaking severe dieting.

This internalisation, or acceptance of the 'thin ideal', is a risk factor for body image disturbance. It can lead to the development of anorexia nervosa, which is far more entrenched in women. For women there is greater pressure to live up to the thin ideal than the 'muscular ideal' represents for men, even though dissatisfaction with body image has increased for men, possibly due to the change in representation of the ideal male 'metrosexual', who has a fit, slim, toned body, which, as with women, can be achieved by only a few men. These are unrealistic expectations and cannot be reached without hiring a personal trainer and strict dieting.

Influences on a person's body image can be positive or negative depending on factors such as family, with the mother dieting and making negative comments about her body; peer influences, such as teasing those who are overweight and perceiving defects in others' appearances; community attitudes to eating and weight; and the representation of beauty in the media.

A person is 'beautiful' if they are thin, and if they are overweight they are much less of a person.

Education through schools with antibullying policies is a more positive influence, as are parent modelling exercises, healthy eating, a focus on personal qualities and peer acceptance of others despite their appearance. Early intervention is the key to overcoming body image disturbances and the resulting depression, anxiety and eating disorders. Doctors and other health professionals, teachers and parents need to recognise early warning signs of body image disturbance and identify where help is available. More access to mental health professionals is also important. The message from sufferers of eating disorders is that it is not a choice but a serious psychological illness. No one person or thing can be blamed; it is a combination of social values, beliefs, personality traits and environment.

One size does not fit all, and a purely medical approach is not as effective in dealing with eating disorders as a more varied approach. Eating disorders need specialised and individual treatment options. It is vital that individuals can be separated from the illness and that the treatment they undergo shows them respect and upholds their rights. As access to effective treatment is vital, funding must be made available for the increasing number of sufferers. (*Time expired*)

Mrs VALE (Hughes) (4.04 pm)—I recognise the member for Chisholm in raising this important issue in the community. Anorexia nervosa and bulimia nervosa are the two most serious eating disorders and are a blight on the lives of tens of thousands of young Australians. Figures I have seen indicate that anorexia affects two out of every 100 teenage girls and bulimia may affect up to three in every 100 teenage girls. For some it is a death sentence. One in every five anorexics eventually dies because of their disease, yet there is little evidence that conventional treatments actually work.

Some good news is that medical authorities in Sydney have received funding to conduct the world's first study into the most effective method to treat anorexics, in hospital or as outpatients. The research comes as figures show the number of New South Wales children suffering from the disorder has increased dramatically over the past five years. Doctors at the Children's Hospital at Westmead have been given \$533,000 by the federal government's National Health and Medical Research Council to lead a three-year trial. The hospital's eating disorder service, which treats most anorexia cases in New South Wales involving people under 18, recorded a 20 per cent rise in the number of admissions between 2001 and 2006. Most children admitted had malnutrition so severe that they were at grave risk of dying. The number of patients treated by doctors, in and out of hospital, doubled in the same period, although readmission rates dropped. About 45 new pa-

tients are admitted to the hospital each year. A similar number of people aged between 15 and 20 are admitted to the psychiatric ward at Westmead Hospital.

The best time to discharge an anorexia patient is a controversial topic among the international medical community, with doctors in the United States and Europe holding vastly different opinions. American patients are hospitalised in general pediatric or medical units for two to three weeks, which is the time it usually takes young people with anorexia to regain a normal heart rate, blood pressure and control over their own temperature. In Europe and Britain, patients are admitted to psychiatric units for up to six months so they can reach a minimum normal weight. Although there are no Australian guidelines, the average length of hospital stays in New South Wales varies between six and eight weeks. Victorian patients tend to be admitted for three to four weeks.

In addressing this serious health issue one initiative is research in programs conducted by two Swedish scientists, Professor Per Sodersten and his partner, Dr Cecilia Bergh, of the Karolinska Institute. These scientists have impressed many with their new treatments. Even a number of Australian families are adamant that the new treatment has saved their daughters' lives. Sodersten and Bergh's treatment is based on the notion that eating disorders are not a mental illness—that is, the often bizarre psychiatric symptoms that one sees in anorexics and bulimics, such as overexercising and obsessions about food intake, are a consequence of starvation. It is fundamental to the apparent success of the Swedish treatment that the cause of eating disorders is much simpler: people slide into the disease as they starve and overexercise.

What I find extraordinary about this treatment is that it has its origins in the ruins of war-ravaged Europe. Sixty years ago, allied commanders sent an urgent request for assistance back to the United States. While pushing the Nazis back towards Berlin, they realised they lacked the knowledge necessary to help millions of starving refugees to stay alive.

In Australia, treatment is based on the idea that what causes eating disorders is a pre-existing psychiatric illness, such as depression, an obsessive compulsive disorder, trauma suffered after a sexual abuse or some other notion of underlying cause firmly rooted in the 19th century psychoanalytical notions of Sigmund Freud.

One of the most prestigious scientific journals, *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, recently published a peer reviewed trial of the Swedish treatment, showing 75 per cent of the Karolinska Institute's patients went into remission after just 12 months of treatment. Only 10 per cent relapsed—a previously unheard of success rate—and none of their patients has died. These success rates demand that Australia should

take a closer view of the Karolinska Institute's treatment programs. These results cannot be ignored and Australian families have the right to know that world's best practice is available to them and their children.

Ms KATE ELLIS (Adelaide) (4.09 pm)—I rise today to also speak in support of the motion, moved by the member for Chisholm, on eating disorders. The member for Chisholm has been highly active in raising awareness of poor body image and eating disorders. I commend her on putting forth this motion that calls not just for greater awareness but, importantly, for action to address these devastating illnesses.

I make it clear at the outset that eating disorders are not just about a quest to be thin; they are psychological illnesses with devastating physical consequences. One in twenty Australian women admits to having suffered from an eating disorder, and anorexia is the third most prevalent chronic illness in adolescent girls. It is devastating to look at this nation's high schools, where very few of the students would not know a school mate or fellow student who is suffering from one of these illnesses.

There is an unbelievable pressure in particular on women in our society to be very thin. I do not think that we can stereotype the sort of people who are suffering from these disorders. Just recently, I had a conversation with a friend of mine, who is a highly educated, successful and intelligent woman. I was shocked when she told me that she wished that she could be anorexic but she just did not have the discipline for it. What sort of society are we encouraging when we actually have people seriously wishing that they had psychological illnesses? Eating disorders have been sidelined for far too long. It is long past the time where we must shine the spotlight on them.

As Dr Vivienne Lewis of the University of Canberra has long suggested, early intervention is the key to overcoming body image disturbances and resultant mental health issues such as depression, anxiety and eating disorders. The federal government has an important role to play here. A growing number of young Australians are developing eating disorders, and this is a trend that none of us should allow to continue.

While researching this issue, I came across some rather frightening websites, some based in Australia but most based in the US, although easily accessible by young people in Australia. I will not delve into the disturbing images these pro-ana sites—pro-anorexia sites—conveyed, but their messages are universally horrific: from starving during pregnancy to egging each other on in the race to be skeleton thin. This is an issue that the member for Chisholm has been working on for quite a while.

I know many Australian web servers have been active in removing these pro-ana sites. However, those that remain are sending horrific messages that bones

equal beauty, that people do not need food and, as one site quotes, 'Nothing can't be fixed with hunger and weight loss.' As well as demonstrating the need of many anorexia sufferers to communicate with someone who understands what they are going through, these sites also show just how dangerous eating disorders can be. With better programs aimed at early prevention and treatment of eating disorders, hopefully Australian women and men can find comfort and communication with people there to help, not hinder, their condition.

This is a problem that requires action from those right across our society—for example, *Cosmopolitan* magazine has been very proactive in tackling the issue of poor body image. Individual models, designers and photographers have begun to take this issue very seriously and realise the role that fashion and the beauty industry have to play in influencing body image. I for one do not come from the school of thought that we address this issue by allocating blame alone. Some people like to point the finger at the media, the beauty industry or our magazines; I believe that we must all come together and work together on this issue. I argue that the government should convene a national summit on body image to develop a national code of conduct to ensure the media, the fashion industry and advertisers portray a healthy and diverse range of men and women and ensure that it has effective awareness and action campaigns in place.

On an international scale—and this, sadly, is a global issue—Australia should become a signatory to the Worldwide Charter for Action on Eating Disorders, which calls on those responsible for policy to educate and inform the community about the dangers of eating disorders. With rapid improvements in communications and technology, we are in a better position than ever to utilise these resources, such as the internet, to educate and inform individuals about the issue.

Combating eating disorders in Australia will require united efforts abroad. The charter provides people with eating disorders, their families and loved ones with a list of their basic rights and reasonable expectations regarding eating disorder treatments and services. I believe that if the government wants to send a message to Australia's young people that healthy is beautiful and that this parliament takes the issue of poor body image and eating disorders seriously then we must become a signatory to this charter. I urge the government to act on this motion. We should do everything in our power to stop the suffering. (*Time expired*)

Miss JACKIE KELLY (Lindsay) (4.14 pm)—I have a few issues to raise concerning this private member's motion on eating disorders, but first I will mention what my research has indicated on the eating disorders of anorexia and bulimia. In the last few decades there has been a notable increase in the incidence of all eating disorders, of which anorexia and bulimia

are part. It is, however, uncertain if this is due to an increasing number of people developing the disorders or because of improved recognition, which has led to more cases being diagnosed.

Currently most of the data on the number of people suffering from eating disorders has been gathered by hospital admissions. The number of people admitted represents only a small percentage of all the people affected. It is estimated that eating disorders affect between 0.5 per cent and 3 per cent of the Australian population. At Westmead, the major hospital in New South Wales for the treatment of anorexia, they have 10 beds and 175 patients on a waiting list, the youngest of whom is eight years old. The Australian government is committed to continued reform and improvement of all mental health policies so that sufferers and their families can receive the best possible care and support available.

Under Australia's system of federation, the provision of public mental health services, which currently includes anorexia and bulimia, is the responsibility of the states and territories. The Australian government provides funding through the National Mental Health Strategy to support the policy decisions made by the states and territories. In the 2006 federal budget \$1.9 billion in new funding was added to improve services for people with mental illness, their families, and carers as part of the Commonwealth government's commitment to the Council of Australian Governments' National Action Plan on Mental Health. As part of this package, the Commonwealth government is providing \$538 million for the Better Access to Psychiatrists, Psychologists and GPs initiative through the Medicare Benefits Schedule. This initiative is designed to increase community access to mental health professionals.

The COAG package includes \$28 million for the new early intervention service for parents, children and young people. It is anticipated that this program will provide early intervention for primary school children at risk of developing a mental illness, targeting resources and support for groups of children at risk, plus providing support for parenting programs and the provision of information to children, youths and their families. The Commonwealth government's initiatives include MindMatters, KidsMatter and the National Youth Mental Health Foundation. In addition, the governments' main health and medical research body, the NHMRC, provides continuing support for research into eating disorders, and since 2000 has awarded \$2.25 million towards continued research that investigates eating disorders. As mentioned by the member for Hughes, half a million dollars was recently awarded to the Westmead Children's Hospital to continue the study of anorexia.

Last Wednesday night I attended the Westmead Millennium Institute's granting of initiating awards. I have an interest in the grants, as does the member for Greenway and any other member of this House who has ever joined the minister for health on his regular Pollie Pedal. Last year we raised \$300,000 to go towards research at the Westmead Millennium Institute. I met two young researchers there who were investigating anorexia. They were discussing how evidence had come to the fore that when children as young as five, seven and eight—as has been mentioned here today—are developing anorexia, the causes were biological and not mental health. A lot of the consequences we are seeing are the consequences of starvation, hormones and hypothermia which happen when you lose such vast amounts of weight. That view has been looked at by Professor Per Sodersten and Dr Cecilia Bergh at the Karolinska Institute in Stockholm, which the member for Hughes mentioned. Several of my own constituents have gone to Sweden for treatment at this institute, which has a high success rate. The federal government supports overseas treatments that are unavailable in Australia if they are efficacious, cost-effective and life saving.

It is interesting that there is dispute within the scientific community as to whether the cause of eating disorders is biological or psychological. The school of thought that says it is psychological goes along the lines of what all the members here have said today—that dieting and weight preoccupations are used to avoid, or ineffectively cope with, the demands of a new life stage such as adolescence or a new milestone such as the expectations of adult sexuality or breaking up with a partner. Further research needs to be done. This government is funding that. A national talkfest will not help very much. (*Time expired*)

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. DJC Kerr)—Order! The time allotted for the debate has expired. The debate is adjourned and the resumption of the debate will be made an order of the day for the next day of sitting.

Domestic Violence

Mrs MAY (McPherson) (4.20 pm)—I move:

That the House:

- (1) recognises that:
 - (a) 23 percent of women who have ever been married or in a de facto relationship have experienced violence by a partner at some time during the relationship;
 - (b) the immediate impacts for children of victims include emotional and behavioural problems, lost school time, poor school performance, adjustment and relationship problems;
 - (c) child abuse is more likely to occur in families experiencing domestic violence; and

- (d) children of victims are also at risk of continuing the violence with their own children and partners and are at heightened risk of alcohol and drug abuse and delinquency later in life;
- (2) also recognises that:
 - (a) the social, health and psychological consequences of domestic violence have far-reaching and long-standing negative impacts on families who suffer from domestic violence and on the community as a whole; and
 - (b) there is no excuse for violence and abuse;
- (3) calls on the Government to:
 - (a) establish a National Domestic Violence Death Review Board;
 - (b) establish a National Committee on Violence Against Women; and
 - (c) increase efforts in the area of primary prevention; and
- (4) calls, on a bipartisan level, for a more coordinated and sustained approach to be undertaken by all levels of government in the area of domestic violence.

Domestic violence is a serious and complex issue that, sadly, affects the lives of many Australians, including children. The significance of this social problem should not be taken lightly. It has become very clear that recognition of the complexity of the issue at the macro and micro levels is needed. Domestic violence needs to be understood in the context of social inequality, not on the dynamics of individual relationships. Our communities and indeed our country need to raise awareness about domestic violence and the fact that it will not be tolerated. Indeed, there is no excuse for it.

It is difficult to measure the true extent of domestic violence, but there are suggestions that up to 80 per cent of women who experience domestic violence do not seek assistance. The 1996 Women's Safety Survey conducted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics found that 23 per cent of women who have ever been married or in a de facto relationship experienced violence by a partner at some time during the relationship.

Domestic violence plays a significant role in the lead-up to lethal violence, accounting for 40 per cent of murder-suicides in Australia from July 1989 to June 1996. On the Gold Coast these homicides were instrumental in the establishment of a domestic violence integrated response, which sees representatives from each of the key stakeholder groups—such as courts, police, women's refuges, and the DV Prevention Centre, Gold Coast—review systems response and practice and work collectively towards ending domestic homicides in the region.

Absolutely no good comes from domestic violence. It ruins women's lives and the damage to children is profound. The immediate impacts on children of victims include emotional and behavioural problems, poor school performance and health and relationship prob-

lems. Later on in life, these same people are at risk of continuing the violence towards their own children and partners and are at heightened risk of alcohol and drug abuse and delinquency. On average there were 175 domestic homicides in Australia from 1996 to 2004.

Conducting fatality reviews is one way of gaining a better understanding of the nature and pattern of lethal domestic violence and abuse from a social and systems reform perspective. Domestic violence death fatality review boards have been established in a number of countries, including Canada, the United States of America and Great Britain, and basically bring together representatives from various agencies in a coordinated response to domestic violence, including police, the courts, health domestic violence services, shelters, perpetrator programs, child protection agencies and other professionals with relevant expertise.

A coordinated Australia-wide approach must be adopted if we are to reduce and prevent domestic homicide, identify trends and patterns, improve community interventions and facilitate systemic change. This motion calls on all levels of government to support a national approach. The establishment of a national committee on violence against women would see a coordinated approach where all stakeholders could actively work towards ending violence against women and their children in this country. Over the years there have been a number of programs and strategies aimed at tackling domestic violence, but it is only in recent times that serious consideration has been given to the perpetrator of the violence. There is a need to increase efforts in the area of primary prevention as it is essential to tackle the causes of domestic and family violence rather than simply to deal with the outcomes.

Presently, the system is, in the main, being reactive to outcomes. This is borne out by the fact that the majority of current sentences imposed for a breach of a domestic violence order are primarily a fine. Abusers have often witnessed domestic violence as children. However, abuse that is learned can be unlearned, and positive and healthy ways of relating can be learned. Programs for violent men can have significant effects on the prevalence and frequency of violence. Many men are motivated to change their violent behaviour when they recognise its destructive impact on their children.

The Domestic Violence Prevention Centre, Gold Coast, has been operating a program for men who perpetrate domestic violence. It is recognised as an example of best practice. The program is mandated by the courts, and men are ordered to attend a 26-week educative and therapeutic group. Currently the Domestic Violence Prevention Centre can accommodate only 24 to 60 men per annum due to funding—nowhere meeting the demand when we have 3,600 perpetrators ap-

pearing annually before the Southport Magistrates Court alone on domestic violence offences.

The program aims to change violent behaviour over the long term. The program is part of a coordinated systemic response to domestic violence and is of far greater benefit than those programs which are run in isolation from the justice, law enforcement and social services systems. (*Time expired*)

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. DJC Kerr)—Is the motion seconded?

Mrs Markus—I second the motion and reserve my right to speak.

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler) (4.25 pm)—I strongly support the motion moved by the member for McPherson and I congratulate her for moving it. It acknowledges the terrible consequences of violence against women and calls for action to address it. Whilst I am taking this opportunity to speak today in favour of the motion, I also feel a profound sense of sorrow that any of us have to speak about this issue at all. Violence against women is abhorrent and despicable. It destroys lives, families, childhoods and futures, and it permeates every section of our society. According to the 2006 ABS national survey, an estimated 440,000 Australian women experienced physical and/or sexual violence in the last 12 months. Two out of three women said their children had been witnesses to that violence. Perhaps the worst statistic, though, is the rate of underreporting. Only 20 per cent of female victims of sexual assault and 28 per cent of female victims of other assaults report the incident to the police. These figures tell us that we have simply not done enough to address the problem of violence against women.

Eighteen-year-old Sydney girl Tegan Wagner is an example of how far we have come and how far we still have to go. This young woman was the victim of a horrific sexual assault in Ashfield, which is in my electorate of Grayndler, when she was just 14 years old. At the conclusion of the court case this year, she chose to reveal her identity and speak out about her ordeal. In her interview with ABC radio, Tegan said:

I feel society makes victims feel really ashamed of what's happened to them. ... I wanted to—

report it—

at first, but I had people telling me not to. ... I advise any woman of any age, whatever their assault is, that it's assault and it's a crime against them and that they should stand up for their rights.

I applaud Tegan for her courage, and I echo the call of this strong young woman for all victims of violence to come forward. Tegan's words are inspiring, but they also reveal a terrible truth about our society. It is a tragedy that female victims of violence still feel ashamed to speak out. This motion calls for a coordinated, sustained approach to the problem of violence against women. It is certainly true that this should not

be a political issue. Unfortunately, these issues often are.

The Howard government have run ad campaigns, which are commendable, to raise awareness, and I congratulate the government for doing so, yet it has slashed funding for associations that support women who are the victims of violence. We need to properly fund community legal centres, the very places where many women turn for assistance. The entire federal, community legal centre budget for this financial year is only \$24 million. It has not even been increased to cover inflation. What is more, we need to make sure that in changes to family law we take into account properly the issue of domestic violence.

This year, the government introduced some definitional amendments which push us dangerously close to the decriminalisation of family violence. We need to ensure that we are very diligent in the changes that are made. The government also put in place harsh financial penalties for false allegations, which could present further barriers to the disclosure of incidents of domestic violence. We need to take a stand and move forward constantly on this issue—not two steps forward and one step back.

A Beazley Labor government will show national leadership in addressing the many and complex problems associated with violence against women. We will establish a national council on violence against women and children, which will engage victims of violence, law enforcement agencies and academics. We will establish national goals, time lines and responsibilities to help reduce incidences of violence against women. We will work with state governments and the community sector to improve access to key services such as crisis accommodation. Again, it is a tragedy that many women and children who have been victims of violence have nowhere to go and in many cases simply remain in violent situations.

I strongly support this motion and I support future efforts to respond to this terrible problem. I know that the member for McPherson is very genuine in her commitment and I wish her all the best in her party room to encourage positive steps forward. We must do all we can to ensure that Australian women can live without fear of harm or physical aggression. That is an issue not just for the women but, indeed, for the whole of society if we are going to have genuine, loving families and relationships, which we would all like to see happen but which too often are simply not the reality.

Mrs MARKUS (Greenway) (4.30 pm)—I congratulate the member for McPherson on raising this issue today. I rise to speak about domestic violence, particularly since this morning we all gathered to remember the United Nations International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women. Having worked for 25 years with families, with women and with children

that have been affected by not just domestic violence but abuse of all kinds, I feel that I stand here today with some credibility.

Domestic violence occurs when a family member, partner or ex-partner attempts to physically or psychologically dominate or harm another. Domestic violence can be exhibited in many forms, including physical violence, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, intimidation, economic deprivation or threats of violence. Domestic violence occurs in all geographic areas of Australia and in all socioeconomic and cultural groups. Most incidents of domestic violence go unreported and it is difficult to measure the true extent of the problem.

A study conducted in 1998 by the Australian Institute of Criminology identified that most assaults against women are where the victim knows the offender and that it remains unreported. The 2005 Australian Bureau of Statistics Personal Safety Survey estimates that 36 per cent of women who experienced physical assault by a male perpetrator reported it to police. My local police tell me that cases of domestic violence constitute at least 50 per cent of their workload.

The best indicators available to date about the levels of violence against women in Australia are from the 1996 ABS publication Women's Safety Survey and the more recent Personal Safety Survey 2005. It was found that, of those women who were physically assaulted in the 12 months prior to the survey, 38 per cent were assaulted by their current or previous partner.

There have also been studies of the relationship between domestic violence and homicides. In *Homicide between Intimate Partners in Australia*, from the Australian Institute of Criminology, it was found that domestic violence played a significant role in the lead-up to lethal violence and accounted for 27 per cent of all homicides in Australia between 1989 and 1996. In *Family Homicide Australia* it was found that, on average, there were 129 family homicides each year, 77 of which were related to domestic disputes. This is unacceptable in our nation. This is something that we need to tackle head on with innovative and creative solutions.

However, it is not just women who are at risk. Children and young people can be affected by viewing and hearing domestic violence. I have worked with many children. I remember one case in particular where a child of three viewed their father murdering their mother. These experiences have long-term effects on our children, on our future. Violence does affect the children in the home. Of women who have experienced violence by a current partner, 61 per cent reported that the children in their care viewed or witnessed the violence. A survey published in 2001 by the Australian Institute of Criminology—Young Australians and Domestic Violence—found that up to one-quarter of the

5,000 young people aged from 12 to 20 from all states and territories surveyed had witnessed parental violence against their mother or stepmother. Social and psychological impacts include anxiety, depression, drug and alcohol abuse, sleep disturbances, reduced coping and problem-solving skills, and loss of self-esteem and confidence. Problems at home can affect people's performance at work and even their capacity to continue to be employed.

The role of the Commonwealth to combat domestic violence has increased over time. The Commonwealth has led the standard approaches to policy and legislative reform. I urge the government to establish a national domestic violence death review board, to establish a national committee on violence against women and to increase efforts in the area of primary prevention and intervention. This is not about the tertiary end. I know that we have spent a significant amount of resources focusing on when the violence has occurred, but we need to increase our focus on prevention. We can work with young people to break the intergenerational cycle of violence. We need to work with victims and perpetrators to break the cycle of violence and we need to work with communities to eradicate violence. Programs aimed at re-educating violent offenders already exist in Australia. I strongly recommend that it be made mandatory to refer all men who have perpetrated violence against women to programs, and I call upon the cooperation of all state governments to take a strong and bipartisan approach to ensure this happens. *(Time expired)*

Ms LIVERMORE (Capricornia) (4.35 pm)—I take a similar position to the member for Grayndler, who said that, while he appreciated the opportunity to speak on this very important topic, he would like to be in a society where the problem of violence against women was not as commonplace and as urgently requiring solutions as it is in Australia at the moment.

The member for McPherson is to be commended for bringing this motion to the House today, especially considering that Saturday, 25 November was White Ribbon Day, and that is the day that marks the United Nations International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women. I was very proud to stand with many of my colleagues earlier on today—men and women and members of all parties—as we put forward our commitment as parliamentarians to work in every way we can to eliminate violence against women and indeed violence wherever it occurs and against whom-ever it occurs in our community.

I am sure many people would be shocked by the statistics listed in the member for McPherson's motion and those we have heard in the debate so far. One of those figures, which we can see in the member's motion, shows 23 per cent of women having experienced violence by a partner at some time in a relationship.

This is a horrendous statistic, one which governments of all persuasions must act urgently to address.

There have been many reports and sources that tell us about the prevalence of violence in our society and particularly in our homes. The 2004 report from Access Economics titled *The cost of domestic violence on the Australian economy* contained statistics on the impact of domestic violence. The statistics showed that domestic violence costs this country more than \$8 billion per annum. The report put the total number of domestic violence victims for the year 2002-03 at 408,100. I note that that is consistent with the Bureau of Statistics figures that the member for Grayndler cited not long ago. That report also stated that there were 268,800 children living with victims of domestic violence.

To go further in setting out the extent of this problem: domestic violence is the biggest health risk to Australian women, with one in four women experiencing sexual or physical violence at some point in their lives. It is clear from those statistics—and the reality and the horror lying behind those statistics—that violence in our community, particularly domestic violence, has to be a priority for all governments and for all of us in this House. While I acknowledge that the government has clearly recognised its role in addressing violence against women in this country through its 'Violence Against Women: Australia Says No' advertising campaign, there still are serious gaps in the government's approach to addressing domestic violence and violence against women in our country. That advertising campaign is a \$23 million investment in addressing the problem, but we do not believe the government has done a proper evaluation of the impact of that campaign.

In the meantime, around this country there are other services that provide help to victims of domestic violence and to women who have suffered violence and they are not getting the funding that they need to meet the demand, in particular women's shelters or shelters for victims of domestic violence. One of the problems that faces the Rockhampton women's shelter in my area of Central Queensland is not so much about meeting the demand for shelter at the point of crisis—when women are fleeing domestic violence—but about where women and their families go afterwards. The rising cost of housing and the very tight rental market in Central Queensland make it very difficult for women and their families who are escaping domestic violence to find somewhere to go—an affordable, safe place to live—after they have left the women's shelter in our community. If the government is serious about addressing domestic violence and helping the victims of domestic violence, it has to have a much broader strategy which takes into account all the dimensions of the problem. *(Time expired)*

Mr JOHNSON (Ryan) (4.40 pm)—I am pleased to speak on this very important motion brought into the parliament by my very good friend and Queensland colleague the member for McPherson, whose reputation in this place for bringing important issues and motions to the chamber is indeed unparalleled. She moved this motion on domestic violence because it is an important issue for our country to address. As a member of parliament, as a member of the government party of the day and as a husband, a son and a brother, I want to speak very strongly on this issue. In 21st century Australia there is no place for domestic violence. Domestic violence is unacceptable. People in positions of authority and influence, indeed all citizens of our country, ought to put up their hands to say that the time for domestic violence in whatever form should be stamped out from our communities.

Domestic violence can occur in many forms—when a family member, partner or ex-partner attempts to physically or psychologically dominate or harm the other; and through physical violence, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, intimidation, threats of violence and economic deprivation. At the outset, I want to thank all of those in our community, right across our land, who have given much of their time to supporting community work, including charities whose focus is taking care of victims of domestic violence. I applaud their great generosity of spirit and heart; they all deserve our applause and our commendation here in the parliament.

There is enough suffering in the world, and we certainly do not need more of it. As previous speakers have alluded to, the financial cost of men inflicting suffering and pain on women in our country is in the billions of dollars. However, the emotional and the human cost is immeasurable and ought to say something of this issue. We should put up our hands and do everything within our human power to eliminate domestic violence in our country.

Following on from the 1996 ABS Women's Safety Survey, the 2005 ABS Personal Safety Survey surveyed both men and women. The survey represents the most up-to-date picture of domestic violence in our country. The survey asked women about their experiences of violence and found that 5.8 per cent of women in Australia had experienced violence in the 12-month period preceding the survey in 2005, compared with 7.1 per cent in 1996. In 2005 some 4.7 per cent of these women had experienced physical violence, including physical assault and the threat of physical assault, compared with 5.9 per cent in 1996; and 1.6 per cent had experienced sexual violence, including sexual assault and the threat of sexual assault, compared to 1.5 per cent in 1996. Those figures are very startling. They are very instructive to us as leaders in this place that we need to do more to come up with solutions and policies that can address this issue.

The government has done a commendable job in trying to address the issue of domestic violence, but more can always be done. I do not think this should be an issue that becomes party political. We should all stand together, shoulder to shoulder, and say that it is something that both sides of the parliament can work on together and that we can come up with very good policies and ideas to stamp out the scourge of domestic violence in our homes and in our communities.

There is a national 24-hour, seven-day-a-week helpline for victims of abuse. I want to give that number in the parliament so that anyone who might be in a terrible situation and in need of assistance has it. It is 1800 200 526. Over 65,000 calls have been received on this number since 2004. To me, that is 65,000 calls too many in our Australian community. We should all be resolute in trying to address this issue in the interests of our community. (*Time expired*)

Dr EMERSON (Rankin) (4.45 pm)—I would like to commend the member for McPherson for raising the issue of domestic violence in the parliament. It is a fundamentally important issue to any civil society. I would take up the offer of the member for Ryan to seek a bipartisan approach to this terrible problem in our country.

Firstly to the facts: based on surveys done by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, it appears that in Australia only 28 per cent of female victims of assault and just 20 per cent of female victims of sexual assault report the matter to police. Based on that and some other work, the ABS has concluded that one in five women experienced domestic violence or sexual assault in the last year. Any number is unacceptable, but one in five women experiencing domestic violence in the last year is an astonishingly high number. Over their lifetimes as many as 57 per cent of women have reported experiencing at least one incident of physical or sexual abuse. For anyone to suggest—and no-one has in this debate—that this is not a national scandal would be way off the mark. It is a terrible indictment of us as a country and of our hope and aspiration to be a civil society when women are being bashed and sexually abused at this sort of rate.

It is not only the direct victims of domestic violence to whom we should be paying attention. One quarter of our young people have witnessed violence against their mother or stepmother. In my first speech when I came into the parliament in 1998, I said how horrifying it is to imagine little kids watching their father beat their mother. It is just a shocking thing, and as a parliament we have not done anywhere near enough to deal with this terrible problem in Australia.

Last year, for example, when the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program five-year agreement was to be signed, the government actually reduced base funding for the service. I do not want to make this a

highly political contribution, but I do need to point this out. It was done in spite of evidence that there was a lot of unmet demand for the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program by women who needed to flee the violence in the house or the premises in which they were living. The sort of assistance provided through that program is not available to anywhere near the number of women who need it. As a consequence, some women will return to violent homes simply to make sure that their children have a roof over their heads. So women take a beating to protect their children and so that their children are not homeless.

There have been some positive developments. The Victorian government released a survey entitled *Two steps forward one step back: community attitudes to violence against women*. It showed that community attitudes towards violence against women have not shifted significantly. The positive development is that the survey has at least been conducted. But the brutal truth is that violence against women and children continues to be trivialised and condoned by many Australians.

I think it is great that the Howard government has put the ads against domestic violence to air but that is not of itself a comprehensive response to this problem, and nor do I believe that the Howard government asserts that it is a comprehensive response to it. Instead of a piecemeal approach where a little bit of money goes to the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program and some ads go to air, we need to develop a national plan to prevent violence against women and children. That is what Labor has committed to do. *(Time expired)*

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. IR Causley)—Order! The time allotted for this debate has expired. The debate is adjourned and the resumption of the debate will be made an order of the day for the next sitting.

GRIEVANCE DEBATE

Question proposed:

That grievances be noted.

Unemployment

Mr QUICK (Franklin) (4.50 pm)—Today I rise in this place to highlight something that I am sure is an issue in each and every one of the 149 seats in the Australian federal parliament. Today, during question time, the Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations waxed lyrical about the fact that the number of long-term unemployed is falling. I agree that it is great news: getting more and more people into the workforce is a great news story. The unemployment rate is now below five per cent, and it has been at that level for the last several months.

It is a great news story, and I congratulate the government. But people should realise—and I know that

everyone in this place realises it—that this does not give the full picture. I represent a seat in Tasmania that covers rural and regional areas, and the options for people who live in these small country towns are severely curtailed when it comes to seeking work. Transport is very poor and job opportunities are scarcer in these areas than they are in the major population centres. In Tasmania, where we probably have one of the highest unemployment rates in all of Australia, the rate is a heck of a lot lower than it was when I first came to this parliament in 1993.

But the fact is that there are stacks and stacks of people of working age who are not participating in the labour market. These people want to work. According to the ABS figures, there are over one million of these people—one million people of working age who are not participating in the labour market, and they want to work. These people, unfortunately, are not eligible for jobseeker allowance and not eligible for any sort of training or placement assistance, and I find that an absolute shame. Employers also are not able to take these people on under employment subsidy as, once again, they do not qualify for the retraining assistance.

So here we have a million people in Australia who want to work and who are of working age, and, because they do not meet the criteria, the Job Network are not interested because they cannot make a buck out of them. The employer would love to take them on, but he or she is not going to get that financial assistance from the government. It is sad to say that there are some employers whose hearts are not in the right place and who want to make a quick quid out of the fact that people are there, available, and want to work. So, effectively, these people are marginalised from participating, from actively looking for work.

I know quite a few of these people. Sadly, in my electorate I have large swathes of public housing where there are no jobs, where people are marginalised—so much so that they have to put in their CV from a letterbox in another suburb because, if they put a certain postcode on their application, on their job resume, people will not give them a second chance. That is absolutely appalling—having to hire a private postbox across the river in another suburb, basically telling a lie that they are living in another suburb, just so that their resume gets past first base.

As I said, these one million people come from all age groups, not necessarily from broadacre public housing. They come from a range of socioeconomic backgrounds. The sad fact is that many of these people are aged between 40 and 65. I had my 65th birthday in June this year, and next year I will be unemployed. I am taking the option to retire and do something else with my life.

Mr Hockey—We'll miss you, Harry.

Mr QUICK—Thank you, Minister. I would like to think that I have something to contribute in my next life, but I am going to have to go out and sell myself. If I go to the Job Network, they are not going to be interested. They are not going to help with my resume, because they are not going to make a buck out of it. That is sad. I am one individual, but there are one million of these people.

I know for a fact that this is placing enormous strain not only on the person themselves but on their family. In numerous instances that come into my office we have a situation where the wife is working and not earning a great deal of money, and the husband has been retrenched, for a variety of reasons, and would like to get back into the workforce. The combined income is \$38,000, which in this day and age is not a heck of a lot. If these people have young children or teenage children who want to get the best educational opportunities—and, let's face it, as an ex-teacher I know just how costly it is to educate your children in this day and age—and the husband wants to work, the Job Network is not really interested because it is easier to place other, younger people because there are not only financial rewards but retraining opportunities. As for the employer, let's face it: who would you rather have? A young person in their 20s or someone in their 40s? Employers do make ageist decisions. So this man, perhaps 45, is at home; Centrelink are not really interested in him; the Job Network are not interested. After a while, the frustration sets in. When you hawk your resume around they do not tell you that you are too old, but you just do not get enough of the interviews and opportunities. This frustration eats into you. It affects your family life. The pressure is not only on your spouse but also on your kids.

With one million of these people, I think it is incumbent upon the 150 of us here and the 76 senators to realistically look at these people. As I said at the outset, the Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations today during question time said that the number of long-term unemployed is falling, and I said, 'That's great news.' The unemployment rate is about 4.8 per cent; that is great news. But we have a whole host of people who want to work, and they do not get any support. I have nothing but admiration for my Job Network providers. They do a fantastic job in placing people into work. But they place the easier ones first, and the harder ones are getting further and further marginalised.

And then we have a whole bunch of people who are in the workforce and out of the workforce. Depending on whether Centrelink has a crackdown or not, these people are ripping off the system. The Treasurer said when he introduced the GST that the black-market economy was going to disappear. I can tell you for a fact that that is a load of rubbish—an absolute load of

rubbish. I would like to suggest today that the government seriously considers an amnesty for a whole bunch of people who are playing the system, principally to get a healthcare card. There is an unrealistic belief that, if you have a healthcare card, it opens a whole lot of doors: you get cheap this and cheap that, cheap medicines; you go to the local school and they give you a discount on your school fees; and there are a whole lot of benefits. So why should you put all of your eggs into one basket, into trying to get a job, when the Job Network and Centrelink are not interested and it is all too hard? People think: 'Let's play the system. Let's go out into the bush with a chainsaw, get eight tonnes of wood, stick it on the Brooker Highway and try and sell it. And let's hope Centrelink doesn't have a crackdown like they did a couple of months ago when they caught 20 people.' The tax office was also there at the time. You can catch 20 people, but I can tell you that there are another 300 or 400 that they never catch. (*Time expired*)

Drought

Mrs HULL (Riverina) (5.00 pm)—I rise in the House today to raise the plight of the farmers, the businesses and the communities across my electorate of Riverina as a result of this devastating drought. At the outset can I say to the House that this drought has impacted on and affected almost every person in my electorate and beyond; I am sure that it is impacting on every other electorate. At this point I am very concerned about the way in which communities are managing.

There is such a resilient and positive attitude in our communities. Get-togethers are being organised in most communities across my electorate. Somebody in the community is organising sausage sizzles, steak sandwiches, a beer, so that people can come together and talk about the issues that are confronting them in this very significant time of drought. That is providing some assistance, benefit and strong support for many of those who, at times, are quite paralysed because they simply do not know where to go next.

This government has done a lot. I would like to openly congratulate the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, the Hon. Peter McGauran, for his application in ensuring that EC is available to as many people as possible. I thank the Prime Minister for, as usual, undertaking to go out and look at the issues first hand, along with the Deputy Prime Minister, the Hon. Mark Vaile, just to see what is taking place. I sometimes think that people living in city areas simply have no concept of how their goods get to the supermarket shelves so that they can purchase them on a weekly basis. My plea in this House today is that, unless we all want to walk around naked and emaciated, we need to look at the benefits that producers from right across

Australia provide to the people of Australia and to the international market as well.

In just one of the dryland areas that I represent, in a draw zone centred around Temora, in November–December 2005, which was the first cropping year they had had in five years, they delivered in excess of 500,000 metres of grain to their delivery site. That represented an extensive amount of money that came back to the community after a long and protracted drought period. But this year, the same draw zone is estimated to deliver only 10,000 metres as against 500,000 metres last year. The recovery period for this dryland area, which is probably one of the worst affected areas—around Ariah Park, Temora, Ardlethan—is just extraordinary. They simply cannot get on their feet. If you drive through the electorate, you see paddock after paddock of dry, dusty earth, with absolutely no covering on it at all.

Our sheep and cattle sales are the highest on record. You wonder how people who have spent their lives building up their breeding herds are ever going to be able to start again. But they will. If the rain comes and assistance is provided for them to be able to stay on the land, they will come back. They always do, because that is the nature of farming.

In dryland farming we are used to drought and to crops being totally ravaged by the lack of water. If we look at the irrigation areas, we have seen the absolute decimation of our crops in those areas. Much of that is due to the cuts in our water allocations. Our irrigators have had progressive cuts over a number of years. They have managed; they have cut off water to many of their bays and they have decided to grow only the amount of crop that their water supply can sustain. So for those irrigators it has been a matter of remaining sustainable. They were given the figure of 24 per cent that they would have from the Murrumbidgee to grow this year's crop. Many of them looked at efficiencies, put together their crops and decided how many bays would be able to accommodate their 24 per cent allocation and bring them a return. They did their figures regarding fertiliser, seed and inputs and said, 'If we can get 24 per cent of our water, as we've been guaranteed, we can still deliver to not only our families but to our surrounding communities who are absolutely reliant on us getting a crop.' Only six weeks after the farmers had planted, having seen their rice and corn coming through and looking beautifully healthy in the amount of beds that they could afford to plant with a 24 per cent allocation, we then had another six per cent reduction, down to 18 per cent. Then, straight on top of that, there was a reduction to 15 per cent.

Whilst I recognise that the New South Wales state government has to make very hard decisions because of the amount of inflow to the dams, in essence it has taken its eye off the ball on this issue. It was in a no-

win situation; the water simply was not coming in. Somebody took their eye off the ball, and only six weeks after my farmers put all their inputs in the ground. I remind this House that they would never have planted if they had not had that reliable figure provided to them by the Department of Natural Resources and the state government.

What we have now is a catastrophe. All of this water—an extraordinary amount of water—that has been applied to the rice, the corn and the other irrigated crops is now a total waste. About 20,000 hectares have been planted with rice alone. They have incurred costs of about \$1,000 per hectare. There is about \$20 million in lost opportunities. They have used 50,000 megalitres of water, and that water carried a price of about \$400 a megalitre. That is a total of about \$20 million worth of water and it will not yield a crop. So where is the waste? The waste is the water that was allowed to be put onto the crops. The waste is the inputs that were put in, with every good intent, by my farmers and producers. They now find themselves in a position where they simply have nowhere to go.

There is every good reason why the New South Wales state government should offer compensation for the water that was taken away from our producers. It is an absolute crisis but there has been no offer from the New South Wales government. In fact, the Labor Party voted down a motion in the New South Wales House that sought compensation or financial assistance for farmers for the water that was lost as a result of reductions in their allocation, which was through no fault of the farmers. I implore the New South Wales government to look at the compensation that really is deserved by the irrigators and to seriously consider assisting my growers across the Murrumbidgee area so that they are able to provide for their communities and their families in the coming years. This is a major drought and something that is devastating to all of my communities. (*Time expired*)

Port Adelaide

Mr SAWFORD (Port Adelaide) (5.10 pm)—My mother's family, the Tuxfords, arrived in Port Adelaide in 1839 from Boston in Lincolnshire. They were wine merchants and, not surprisingly, their descendants were involved in hotels, farming and small business. Politically speaking, although they lived in the western suburbs of Port Adelaide there was not a Labor voter amongst them and there was no connection to the Port community. There still is not.

My father's family arrived in Port Adelaide in 1851 from Northampton, in particular the villages of Lodington, Corby and Desborough, where Sawfords live today. Like Port Adelaide, they voted Labor. They elected my cousin Phil to the House of Commons in 1997 for the seat of Kettering. In Port Adelaide, the men were seamen, fishermen, Navy personnel and ma-

rine and waterside workers. The women were tougher. They became inextricably linked to Port Adelaide and, in particular, the Le Fevre Peninsula and there was not a conservative voter amongst them. There still is not.

Notwithstanding my ancestors' arrival, Port Adelaide has a very special place in the history of South Australia. Before roads and railways were built, it was the meeting place of the fledgling colony's growing mining, farming, mercantile and intellectual communities. Without a doubt it was and remains the spiritual soul of the South Australian settlement. Because of these factors, Port Adelaide and its immediate environment rightfully received great respect and attention from all levels of government. Unique transport systems such as double-decker trolley buses linked Port and its popular and safe beaches at Semaphore and Largs Bay to the capital, Adelaide, and the richer eastern suburbs. Trains and trams took country folk and city and suburban Adelaide directly to Semaphore, Largs Bay and Port Adelaide. The important point to note is that there was a connectedness with Port and with the western suburbs of Adelaide.

Until the early 1960s, Port Adelaide was the second largest retail centre in metropolitan Adelaide. State and local government authorities could not afford to ignore what was happening in Port Adelaide. Not surprisingly, Port Adelaide has been and is traditional Labor heartland. There is a great pride and a passion in the communities of Port Adelaide and the western suburbs. It can lie dormant but, once raised, it can never be ignored. And that pride and passion is beginning to show signs of changing the political landscape, perhaps permanently.

In 1961, a shortsighted and tragic decision by the state Liberal government began that change. In that year it was decided, against the protests of only a few, that the sometimes unreliable but nevertheless opening Jervois Bridge would be replaced by a fixed bridge. That decision destroyed the vision of an open waterway from Outer Harbour, up the Port River, through the swamps of what is now West Lakes and out to sea just before the Grange Jetty. The Portland Canal was also filled in and this marked the beginning of a downward spiral for Port Adelaide. Obviously there were other factors. Containerisation of shipping changed forever the way the port operated.

Port people were horrified at the death of the upper reaches of the Port River and the Portland Canal. Can you just imagine how valuable they would be today? However, the protests were muted and had little, if any, public airing. It was 1961. The state Liberal Party had begun their contempt and disdain for the port and for the western suburbs, which unfortunately continues today, to their electoral cost. Negative decisions for Port continued. The community did make stronger protests against the building of shopping centres at Arn-

dale and West Lakes and the failed Myer project at Queenstown, but these protests quickly ran out of energy and momentum. A brief renaissance of Port under Labor occurred in the mid-1980s. However, that was seriously stalled by the stock market crash of 1987 and the collapse of the State Bank.

The political landscape changed dramatically, however, with the Brown-Olsen-Kerin Liberal governments of the 1990s. The Port and western suburbs communities who holidayed on the Yorke, Eyre and Fleurieu peninsulas and in the River Murray towns could not help but note the infrastructure expenditure in those areas and the total absence of spending where they lived. A level of angst emerged.

One of the reasons given for the failure of the city of Port Adelaide to re-emerge as a major retail centre was the loss of population and the huge volume of truck traffic that rattled and rumbled through the main streets. Both Labor and Liberal promised a third road and rail crossing to take the traffic away from the city centre. The community wanted tunnels—the best option. They were promised opening bridges after being threatened with a causeway by the Liberals. Although disappointed, residents resigned themselves to the fact that at least the inner harbour would be accessible—and, anyway, what else would you expect from a Liberal administration?

However, in a remarkable backflip, the newly elected state Labor government, knowing opening bridges were just a second-best option, wanted to renege on even this decision and give the community what it totally rejected: fixed bridges. The Liberals, Business SA, the South Australian Freight Council, the RAA, the Road Transport Association, the South Australian Farmers Federation and, indirectly, Flinders Ports agreed. Interestingly, those groups were the same philistines responsible for the fixed Jervois Bridge decision in 1961. Nothing changes! Port Adelaide people were outraged. State Labor were behaving worse than even the Liberals. They demanded I lead a charge to have the state Labor government honour the promise they made. In Port Adelaide, keeping your word is far more important than status or money.

A huge campaign was mounted and over 95 per cent of the state electorates of Port Adelaide and Lee supported opening bridges and the honouring of the Labor promise. In fact, more than 600 people packed into the Port town hall and cheered loudly when the government agreed to honour its promise and have opening bridges. More would have attended but the government gave in at four o'clock in the afternoon. People power won. Behind the scenes, the opponents of opening bridges lobbied furiously to overturn the decision. They failed. The Premier intervened and the decision held. The people in Port were duded in 1961. They were not going to be duded again, especially by a La-

bor government they so strongly supported. The former sleeping giant that was the traditional Labor heartland was now fully awake.

It did not escape constituents that prior to this year's state election both Labor and Liberal were disingenuous when it came to the sale of the Cheltenham Racecourse, the last significant open space in the western suburbs. The Liberals, who had publicly supported the sale, were rightly decimated in the western suburbs. With no Independents of note in the lower house seats, many people voted for No Pokies MP Nick Xenophon. That was not because they agreed with his policies but because they rejected the Liberals and wanted to fire a warning shot across the bow of state Labor. The community reaction against the sale of the Cheltenham Racecourse was huge. That it was not recognised by the local state members simply reinforced a view held in the community that they were out of touch, disconnected from their community and had glass jaws when they were criticised. They may have got into government on a 'Labor Listens' campaign, but that was where it began and ended. On 19 September this year 934 people came to a public rally against the sale of the racecourse, 93 people wanted their apologies read out, and 306 emails and hundreds of phone calls were received. I know this community. Many Port people would rather have their teeth pulled out without anaesthetic than go to a public rally, yet in the biggest political meeting in the west for 40 years they turned out in force. The political landscape has changed.

Other announcements made by the state government this year have also exacerbated the public angst, not because the decisions were wrong but because they confirmed an already perceived bias against the needs of the Labor heartland. One was the announcement to preserve 50 hectares of land in the north-eastern suburbs. Damn good decision, but not for the west. Another was the announcement concerning the rebuilding of the Rapid Bay jetty. Good decision, but not for the west. One policy for the east; another for the west! For over 40 years locals have begged state governments to rebuild the jetties at Largs Bay, Semaphore, Grange and Henley Beach. The only and continued response is unsatisfactory repair work. Hundreds of people visit Rapid Bay; hundreds of thousands of people visit Largs Bay, Semaphore, Grange and Henley Beach. I am glad the member for Hindmarsh is here. More than 7,000 people in his seat and mine are in the hospitality and tourism business. It is the biggest employer in both our seats. These are employment figures you want to protect and grow, not ignore.

I will make mention of a couple of other matters which also tell an all too familiar story of discriminatory government against the western suburbs in Adelaide. The hospital for the west is the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Woodville. Constituents welcome the state

Labor government's investment in the QEH. However, they are not fools. A once proud 800-bed hospital with many specialist services is no comparison to a 200- or 300-bed hospital with limited specialist services, which is what we have got now. Also, the state government promised during the election they would make a public announcement commemorating the memory of arguably Australia's bravest soldier, Sergeant Thomas Currie 'Diver' Derrick. Nine months later: no decision, nothing—a very poor show. And on another matter, the top end of town in Adelaide never pay to go to the art gallery or the museum, and rightly so, but down in Port we have to pay to go to the maritime and railway museums. Tony Blair had a social inclusion policy in the United Kingdom. It is about time the state Labor governments in this country had the same.

Governments that fail to appreciate that spin and manipulation of the facts are no longer acceptable will be punished in the only way people power works: the withdrawal of people's votes. Representative democracy is making a comeback in this country, and not before time. Political change will be the order the day in the foreseeable future. (*Time expired*)

Autism

Miss JACKIE KELLY (Lindsay) (5.20 pm)—Autism is a disorder, which shows itself in early childhood, in which a person's ability to think, feel and communicate with others is impaired. All children and adults who have the condition have problems in the areas of social interaction, social communication and imagination. They may appear aloof and indifferent to other people and often cannot understand the meaning of gestures, facial expressions or tone of voice. Because of their limited capacity to understand other people's feelings they do not develop friendships easily. People with autism do not look any different from anyone else. They are not physically disabled but they may have learning difficulties. The common factor that everyone with autism shares is a difficulty in making sense of their world. In particular, children with autism appear to live in a world of their own and in some cases use a language or vocabulary only they understand.

Autism is one of the most common developmental disabilities and its characteristics show themselves in the first three years of life. There are three to four times as many males diagnosed with autism as females. However, girls who have the condition are likely to show more severe symptoms. Although autism is often associated with learning problems, not all people with the condition are affected in this way. Every person with autism is affected differently, and some live and work successfully in the community, having adjusted to the effects of their condition on their lives.

In children, symptoms include: delayed development, particularly of language skills; solitary play and withdrawal from others; apathy toward other people's

attempts at communication; a short attention span; a dislike of physical affection; displays of temper towards the self or others; being able to learn one day, but not the next; difficulty with changes in routine; lack or absence of eye contact; repetitive and compulsive behaviour which, if interrupted, may provoke temper tantrums; difficulty in learning; impaired senses—that is, sight, hearing, taste, smell and touch; and, in some, extraordinary talent or brilliance in specific skills. The most renowned illustration of that is the portrayal of Raymond in the classic film *Rain Man*, in which Tom Cruise had an autistic brother. I believe Dustin Hoffman got the Oscar for his betrayal of Raymond. They have not been able to pinpoint the exact causes of autism. Research has been done into genetic links et cetera, and a lot more work has to be done and is going on.

Parenting is a difficult job, and for parents of a child with autism there are extra challenges. These extra challenges are things like respite and things that Luke Priddis and his wife, Holly, came to know with the birth of their third child, Cooper, who was diagnosed with autism. Luke Priddis is the 2007 Player of the Year for my beloved Penrith Panthers. He and his wife found it very difficult to research any types of support groups or to locate others dealing with this need. Luke has always been very forthright, and when he found that the Rugby League players had no appropriate superannuation he designed a specific superannuation scheme for Rugby League players. He is currently the Treasurer of the Rugby League Players Association—he is a bit of a financial whiz kid. When he found that there was very disparate and uncoordinated support for parents, families and carers of people with autism and for people with autism he put together the Luke Priddis Foundation, which can be found at www.lukepriddisfoundation.com. Information on autism can be found at www.aeiou.org.au.

On 29 November the Luke Priddis Foundation is holding a fundraiser at Le Montage in Leichhardt. They are fundraising to get money for this foundation to continue in its goals. It is about providing services and early childhood intervention, which is a favourite of mine, for children diagnosed with autism. If you would like to go to that function, please ring Sharon Finnigan on 0419636616 or contact the Panthers club in my area of Penrith. There are fantastic prizes to be won, such as a trip to the Gold Coast to be the guest of the NRL for the launch of the 2007 season and a day with Gai Waterhouse at her stables. Such media personalities as Ray Hadley and Karl Stefanovic will attend and all proceeds will go to the Luke Priddis Foundation.

This highlights one of the things I have always been moving towards in my relationship with the Penrith City Council, which used to run 75 per cent of the

childcare places in Penrith. The federal government has doubled the number of childcare places in Australia from 300,000 to 600,000 in the last decade. The private sector is overwhelmingly the provider of child care to date. I always have a problem when governments try to compete with the private sector. Governments should really stay with the leading edge of it. I often think there is a golden opportunity for councils like Penrith City Council and other councils that have a childcare centre which is losing market share to the private sector to move into these types of leading edge specific childcare centres—centres for autistic children, for kids with a disability, for kids who are sick or for kids whose parents work shiftwork. All of these niche markets need to be catered for in the two- to five-year-old age group.

Luke Priddis and his wife discovered a school in Wetherill Park that ran an autism specific program, but for the two- to five-year-olds there was that vacuum. Luke needs to be congratulated for his efforts in taking this on. I know the Prime Minister has sent a message, which I hope will be played on the night of the 29th. I cannot get there because parliament is sitting—I would dearly love to be there. I wish them well and I hope that they raise enough money to launch this foundation and really make an impact in this area. It is certainly where community based, council provided or government provided child care into the future needs to move—to specific types of child care. The private sector is always going to be the strongest and best model in delivering cost-effective outcomes.

The major sponsors of the Luke Priddis Foundation are Lexus, Mondial Assistance, Johnston Rorke Chartered Accountants, the coffee Club, Anthony's Fine Jewellery and a number of other sponsors. If you would like to be a sponsor of the foundation please get in touch with the foundation on the website.

Mr Garrett interjecting—

Miss JACKIE KELLY—Always touting for business. The Queensland Reds have sponsored the foundation, which puts the Panthers to shame, but I am sure the new coach of the Panthers is supporting Luke by giving him time out from the game until after this launch and fundraiser. Uniquely Indigo and New Business Media are the other major sponsors of this foundation. Congratulations to all of them in this cutting edge response to children diagnosed with autism.

When you are searching the internet for information on autism management programs, be aware that not all information on the net is reliable. If they are touting a cure for autism, be very wary of that claim. Do discuss things with your doctor or paediatrician. It is really helpful to talk with other families who have children with autism and the support groups that are available. I wish Luke, his wife and everyone supporting him all the best for the 29 November event. I hope it is just the

start of many great things to come for the Luke Priddis Foundation.

Workplace Relations

Mr GEORGANAS (Hindmarsh) (5.29 pm)—Hindmarsh is made up of people from many different walks of life and many different cultural backgrounds, with different life opportunities and settlement patterns and at different stages in their life cycle, which naturally bring particular activities and concerns to the fore. Within Hindmarsh there are large numbers of people whose background is other than English. We are blessed with many people of Italian backgrounds, as we are with those with Greek, German, Chinese, Vietnamese and many other backgrounds.

Australians have diverse backgrounds, but each community is essential in defining Australia. Thinking back to the middle period of the last century, it is difficult to conceive of an Australia without the great influxes of people of Italian background. Much of the work that Italian migrants performed around Australia in their early days may not have been particularly glamorous nor especially lucrative, and we are talking about hard, laborious work in factories, on production lines, digging trenches and pouring concrete—literally laying the foundations and building modern Australia. The very hard work that was performed by people with limited English but unlimited hopes and dreams for their new lives within Australia was essential to the development of this nation of ours.

Few populations have contributed as much and on such a scale as those of Italian origin and descent. I am not just speaking of the progress that our nation benefited from as a result of the hard work and sweat of the Italian community; I am also speaking of the more subtle things that become apparent over time which benefit the greater Australian population in an almost abstract way, in a way that is gently noticed over the years, suggesting both similarities and differences in the values and lifestyles with which we have moulded our own lives.

Whether you speak of people of Irish, Italian, Greek, Vietnamese or other descent, one thing that is shared throughout our population but which on occasion I find perhaps just that little bit more noticeable is the sense of community that most of our lives revolve around. The social bonds that come through community involvement through our churches, our schools and our sporting and business interests give us much of our worth as members of our society. Our public lives, through which we contribute with and for our neighbours, are the basis of a cohesive society, a community that cares for each other, and a community that can together achieve social changes that can advantage and be used and enjoyed by those closest to us in our private lives.

In my case, today my primary method of community service is through being the representative of Hindmarsh, a position that I am honoured to be entrusted with, as I am sure everyone else in the House is honoured. Previously, my public life consisted more of coaching children's sport, especially soccer. I was involved with the Lions Club in my area and many other community associations and the like, as are so many people around our area who contribute publicly for many, many years.

It is often stated that Australia as a nation would grind to a halt if the voluntary work performed by members of the community through their local clubs was suspended for a time. These are people, community contributors, we collectively owe a great deal to. Their public works keep our communities active, vibrant and sociable. It is difficult to envisage a public person who is not imbued with and does not demonstrate a commitment to the community. As a community, we achieve things that are pleasant, responsible and economical, and also things that are more structural, which enable us to better realise personal objectives that benefit the community indirectly but definitely contribute to the community in the fullness of time.

I am speaking about community activity that can lead to better outcomes for our families. One of the terrific characteristics which is shared by most people is the focus on and love for the family unit, but this is perhaps especially evident amongst the Italian community. The focus on family is something I personally relish. Our children are our lives, and I am eternally thankful for the family that I have, as is, I am sure, everyone else in this chamber. Working with and for the community takes on a deeper meaning when you have children, because the work you do and the people you are doing it for are that much more immediate. Your work in making life better for all has a very close intended beneficiary. We are working to give better life options to all, but the most important group is the next generation of Australians. I want our children to be able to do just that little bit better than we have done. It pains me to think of our children having fewer chances to get ahead than we had, and providing those opportunities is becoming an increasingly difficult task. As a parent, a father, I know the joy that children bring, the love that parents give and the pressures that parents endure.

One of the greatest challenges of young families lies in the increasing interest rates. The income that is today consumed by mortgage repayments is crippling compared with that of the past. Irrespective of the reasons for property values rising so dramatically over the last five years, it is highly ironic that at a time that families are doing it tougher than they have for years, a time that families need every available cent to make

ends meet, the government introduces legislation that makes it that much easier for families to not be able to make ends meet. The legislation is, of course, the extreme legislation of Work Choices. Mortgage repayments are highest at a time when the government has made losing your job easiest and without recourse. Work Choices makes providing for your family that much more precarious.

With financial stresses, people's focus can become more narrow and the bonds in families can become strained. The government should help secure family life, not rip it apart. I know from experience how difficult it is for parents of young children to balance work and family responsibilities. They are doing it tough, battling just to make ends meet, to provide for their children, to secure adequate income, and to provide the children with the best care that they can.

I know through a recent issue in my electorate, the Kurralta Park Child Care Centre experience, how desperate families are to secure care for their children. This is not the first time that parents in the electorate of Hindmarsh that I represent have faced the very real risk of losing a service on which they have relied so much and for so long. A few years ago, another childcare centre within Hindmarsh faced a very shaky future, and the parents faced the most unenviable job of finding replacement care. The community and the parents all got stuck into it. We all lobbied, pressured, and secured the childcare centre's future. Being involved in saving the Lady Gowrie Child Centre gave everyone in the community, including me, a tremendous sense of achievement. I hope that the current situation at the Kurralta Park Child Care Centre will be able to be resolved just as satisfactorily as the Lady Gowrie Child Centre situation was resolved a few years back.

Child care is highly important for working families, as is quality education throughout our children's school years. We do not want a public school-private school divide. We want all options to give quality schooling to all children. Whether students are educated in a public or a private setting, their development as young adults and their engagement in civil society and the workforce are our priorities. From what I see and hear around me in Hindmarsh, our teachers are doing an exceptional job.

The social conscience of the next generation is such that they themselves call into question the policies of the current administration. The Howard Liberal government is totally out of step with young Australians, and I know this because they tell me. This is what they say. Young Australians are more concerned for the future than the Howard Liberal government is. They are concerned for future jobs, they are concerned about climate change and they are concerned, through their campaigning, for making poverty history. Young Australians are looking to the future. The Howard Liberal

government is looking to the past. Young Australians will work hard for a better future. The Howard government's nuclear obsession will not help prevent climate change in the limited time available to us.

These same people are also crying out for opportunities to develop skills on which they can build their futures. Instead, they face degrees for up to \$200,000 and limited opportunities for alternate training. Those who secure training are on slave wages. Young people are being given a worse deal by the Howard Liberal government. Young Australians deserve more choice than massive university debts or limited access to vocational courses. Under this Howard Liberal government, fewer younger Australians will develop high-paid careers. Where families' breadwinners are finding their income more precarious under Work Choices, people starting their working lives in low-skilled, perhaps casual, work are finding it even more difficult to get a fair deal. Young Australians are most at risk under the Howard Liberal government's extreme and unfair industrial relations system. Young Australians are being exploited at work like they never have been before.

This is not the life I would want for any young Australian trying to make his or her way in the world. We focus on our families and try to provide them with the best opportunities, but for all the good work that is done in and around the community by parents with a very clear stake in our nation's future this Howard Liberal government is continuing to let them down.

International Development

Mr BAIRD (Cook) (5.39 pm)—The G20 conference held in Melbourne last week saw the world's economic leaders come together to discuss the challenges facing economies and societies globally. Additionally, the presence of U2 frontman and activist, Bono, here in Australia has put the issues facing developing countries on the agenda. Disease and poverty are just two of many problems confronting the Third World today. As a wealthy country, Australia has a responsibility to play a leading role in helping to address this suffering.

The Millennium Summit in September 2000 was the largest gathering of world leaders in history. At the summit these countries, including Australia, committed to a global strategy for reducing extreme poverty with a prescribed deadline of 2015. These are known as the Millennium Development Goals. They are to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger; to achieve universal primary education; to promote gender equality and to empower women; to reduce child mortality; to improve maternal health; to combat HIV-AIDS, malaria and other diseases; to ensure environmental sustainability; and to develop a global partnership for development.

Each day about 30,000 children around the world die mainly of preventable causes. This is around 11 million children a year; 4.8 million of them live in Africa and 4.7 million in the Asia Pacific. The main

causes of child deaths are neonatal causes, 36.9 per cent; respiratory infections, 19.1 per cent; diarrhoea, 16.6 per cent; malaria, eight per cent; measles, 3.7 per cent; and AIDS, three per cent. These numbers are horrific, yet they are half what they were in 1960 thanks to economic growth, advances in technology and more generous aid. Foreign aid has proven to be effective in eradicating smallpox, largely eradicating polio, and reducing the effects of many other diseases such as river blindness, measles, tuberculosis and malaria. Aid has also provided education for millions of children and young people, reduced the effects of famine and natural disasters, helped to build peace and democracy and assisted many countries to achieve higher levels of economic development.

Abject poverty takes many forms: hunger, disease, lack of income and lack of adequate shelter. The Millennium Development Goals also seek to promote gender equality, education and environmental sustainability. They advocate the basic human rights of all people to health, education, shelter and security. The global effort towards this end has made significant progress. Between 1990 and 2002, average overall incomes increased by 21 per cent. There are also 130 million fewer people in poverty now than there were in 1990. Life expectancy has risen from 63 to 65 years and the child mortality rate has fallen to 88 deaths per 1,000 live births from a 1990 high of 103 deaths per 1,000 live births. What is more, an additional eight per cent of people in the developing world can now access water and an additional 15 per cent now have access to more acceptable standards of sanitation.

However, we have not made progress everywhere and there are significant disparities between countries in terms of their progress or their contribution. Sub-Saharan Africa is where the crisis is at its worst and where we are furthest from meeting millennium targets. Poverty is extreme, there is continuing food insecurity, many people live in slums, and child and maternal mortality rates are devastatingly high. In Asia there has been the fastest progress with the goals, but still hundreds of millions of people remain in abject poverty there. In Latin America there has been mixed progress and in the Middle East and North Africa little or no progress has been made on many of the goals.

The most widely publicised aspect of the Millennium Development Goals is the commitment from the world's wealthiest countries to spend 0.7 per cent of gross national product, GNP, on official development assistance. It says:

We will spare no effort to free our fellow men, women and children from the abject and dehumanising conditions of extreme poverty, to which more than a billion of them are currently subjected.

The 0.7 per cent goal, which was to be spent on official development assistance, or ODA, was first agreed upon

in 1970 by Australia and other developed countries. Resolution 2626 on International Development Strategy for the Second United Nations Development Decade, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in October 1970, stated:

Each economically advanced country will progressively increase its official development assistance to the developing countries and will exert its best efforts to reach a minimum net amount of 0.7 per cent of its gross national product ... by the middle of the Decade.

Yet 36 years later, and only six years after the Millennium Declaration, Australia is spending only 0.3 per cent of GNP on foreign aid. In fact, only five of the 22 OECD donor countries have reached the 0.7 per cent mark in terms of aid: Norway, Sweden, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Denmark. Sixteen of the 22 countries have now committed to reach 0.7 per cent by the year 2015.

Australia has increased its level of aid in recent years. Our ODA spending is currently at \$2.9 billion for 2006-07, which is 0.3 per cent of gross national income, GNI. This is up from the period from 2000 to 2004 when our spending was just 0.25 per cent of GNI. In comparison, the average contribution of OECD donor countries is 0.5 per cent for 2006. Increased economic growth and fairer trade are both critical to reducing poverty. Almost all recent development agreements have highlighted the need for free and fairer trade, increased aid and sustainable debt.

It is noteworthy that Australia has met its international obligations in relation to debt relief. Australia is a committed participant of the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative; we are proud of that. We have gone beyond our formal obligations under the initiative and entirely forgiven the bilateral debts of Ethiopia and Nicaragua. Australia is also one of only a handful of countries to have made an up-front payment of \$136 million to cover the World Bank's share of the Multilateral Debt Relief Initiative. This was announced in this year's budget. However, only 10 per cent of debt in low-income countries has been relieved and much more needs to be done in this area.

Australia is also a leader in free and fairer trade. The World Bank estimates that by 2015, \$86 billion in welfare gains would go to developing countries if full trade liberalisation were to be achieved. We have very low levels of agricultural trade protection. Australia is the leader of the Cairns Group of nations. I was recently in New York as a member of the Australian Mission's delegation to the United Nations General Assembly. It was there that I addressed the Second Committee of the UNGA on this very issue of reducing tariff protection on agriculture throughout the world. Our role in this regard has helped the economic growth of many developing economies. We continue to help the poorest countries to build a greater economic capacity

to meet people's basic needs. There is no doubt that economic growth will drive poverty reduction in the medium to long term, yet aid can help provide more opportunities for faster and immediate economic growth through improved health and education; infrastructure, such as roads and ports; and through improved governance, both of the economy and more broadly.

It is true that corruption is a major obstacle in ensuring aid is spent as it is intended. It is also true that aid is only part of the solution, albeit a very important part. Developing countries do need to improve the rule of law and reduce corruption to ensure that aid is absorbed effectively. Governments in receipt of our aid do need to demonstrate a commitment to sound political processes, institutional reform and tackling corruption. However, it is simply a myth that corruption largely stops aid from reaching its intended recipients. It is unreasonable, however, to suggest that we—or any other country, for that matter—will ever be able to guarantee that 100 per cent of aid is spent on provision of basic services. Aid is the cornerstone of international development because it is unmistakable that people need help right now—not later or in the future when their economies can afford it. Health and education projects throughout the developing world are saving lives and reducing suffering as we speak. These projects are proven and they are cost effective. They are saving children's lives, helping stop the spread of HIV-AIDS, assisting women and girls to achieve their basic rights and protecting the environment.

The recent aid white paper is a step in the right direction in terms of our commitment to a greater foreign aid contribution. However, we need to go further. Australia needs to commit to reaching 0.7 per cent by 2015 and make immediate, tangible steps towards achieving this goal. Within our aid spending we should achieve a better balance between spending on improving governance and spending on basic services like health and education. In our own region particularly, we and other OECD donor countries are not doing enough to support basic services. In 2003-04, total aid from all OECD donor countries averaged just 40c per person for education, \$1.33 per person for basic and reproductive health and \$1.07 per person for water and sanitation. This is not enough to alleviate extreme poverty in our own backyard when just 19 per cent of Australian aid in our region is being spent on basic services. (*Time expired*)

Productivity Growth

Dr EMERSON (Rankin) (5.50 pm)—When we grieve in this parliament, we grieve about such matters as natural disasters, the loss of family and friends, the loss of parliamentarians and other tragedies—although some may suggest that the loss of parliamentarians is rarely a tragedy. Today I want to do something unusual

and grieve about the lack of productivity growth in this country. Before those listening come to the conclusion that this is a very arcane debate, let me point out that today's productivity growth is tomorrow's prosperity.

Productivity growth is not just about the mighty dollar, though putting more income into people's pockets certainly does help. We have just heard the previous speaker, the member for Cook, talking about the fight against global poverty. We would all like to join in helping to make poverty history. That is facilitated by growing incomes so that we might have more to share with the rest of the world, particularly with poor countries. Productivity growth, in generating extra income for Australia, also allows us to ensure that young people have the best possible start in life and that there is a genuine sharing of opportunity around this country so that opportunity, through education, is not confined simply to the sons and daughters of the privileged but also extended to the sons and daughters of the disadvantaged in our great country. Productivity growth allows us to protect the environment, to clean up damage that might have been done by previous generations and to ensure that future damage is avoided. Productivity growth is important to Australia's future.

Let me tell you a story about productivity growth in this country. As a result of the economic reform program implemented by former prime ministers Bob Hawke and Paul Keating, productivity growth during the 1990s surpassed that of almost every country in the developed world, including the United States. To be precise, productivity growth averaged 2.05 per cent per annum, which was a record-breaking decade for Australia, built firmly on the foundations of that comprehensive and ambitious reform program. But, by the turn of the century, Australia's productivity growth had already peaked. The Reserve Bank governor observed in October this year:

The various measures of GDP growth per hour worked suggest there has been approximately zero growth in productivity since the end of 2003.

So there was a record-breaking decade built on Labor reforms, then the productivity miracle petered out under the coalition; it peaked around the year 2000 and by 2003 it was approximately zero, according to the Reserve Bank. On 1 November, in the parliament, the Treasurer got up, armed with statistics produced by the ABS to say, 'Everything's fine; we're going really well on productivity growth.' In fact, he said productivity growth 'is in line with, or marginally in front of, the last productivity cycle'. So we have the Treasurer saying, 'Everything's fine; it's going as strongly as it was as a result of the reforms of the previous Labor government.'

But a closer look at those figures reveals the average annual growth rate of labour productivity over the last two years has been just 0.9 per cent, compared with the

2.05 per cent achieved as a result of the Labor reforms. The Treasurer did not reveal that the same ABS publication said:

Growth in Multifactor productivity (MFP) was flat in the market sector in 2005-06.

Multifactor productivity is different from labour productivity because it measures the efficiency gains from reform and from technological change and innovation. And the truth, as revealed by the ABS, is that that was flat in 2005-06.

The *Intergenerational Report*, upon which the government relies so heavily and which was released in 2002, assumed that productivity growth would slip back from that more than two per cent per annum achieved by the previous Labor government to 1.75 per cent, which is Australia's 30-year mediocre long-term average. But productivity has not slipped back from 2.05 per cent to 1.75 per cent. It is approximately zero, or perhaps on some measures a little bit higher than that—but way short of the 1.75 per cent. What is significant about that figure of 1.75 per cent? The *Intergenerational Report* projections are that, based on productivity growth of 1.75 per cent and the ageing of the population, Australia, from the decade beginning in 2010, will have the slowest rate of growth in income per person since the decade of the Great Depression. So slow productivity growth means slow growth in prosperity—the slowest since the decade of the Great Depression. But we have not been doing anywhere near 1.75 per cent in the last few years under this government. At best, in the last couple of years we have been doing 0.9 per cent. And I will predict here and now in the parliament: when the latest productivity growth figures come out with the national accounts they will show negative productivity growth in the most recent quarter. How do we know that? Because employment has been growing—and growing quite strongly—but there has been very little improvement in productivity itself.

The Treasurer boasted that the Work Choices legislation would boost productivity growth. This is one of the great claims of the Prime Minister and Treasurer—that Work Choices will boost productivity growth. But measured productivity growth in the three months following the introduction of the Work Choices legislation was not 1.75 per cent. It was not even zero. It was minus 0.7 per cent. If we add to that negative figure, which may be revised in the current publication, another negative figure, that would be an enormous indictment on this government in its major claim for the Work Choices legislation—that is, in the six months following the enactment of the Work Choices legislation, productivity growth being negative: a disaster for Australia's economic and social progress.

The Treasurer says that improved labour relations will boost labour productivity. On that he is correct.

But Work Choices does not improve labour relations; it sets employer against employee and tips the bargaining table very heavily in favour of the employer. Is it any wonder that the most recent wages growth figures suggest that wages growth for the low paid has actually been negative—that is, the wages have fallen for the low paid in the period following the introduction of the Work Choices legislation?

I draw people's attention to a report by John Edwards for the Lowy Institute, called *Quiet boom: how the long economic upswing is changing Australia and its place in the world*. Dr Edwards observes that, in the financial year 2004-05, labour productivity actually fell—the first decline in 20 years. So the government was talking about this miracle productivity growth, all of it built on the reforms of the Hawke and Keating governments, and is now presiding over the first fall in productivity growth in 20 years. Where are members of the government? Why don't they come into the parliament and concede that they have not implemented the necessary reforms to guarantee ongoing productivity growth in this country and therefore ongoing prosperity and opportunity for all Australians, particularly disadvantaged Australians?

We look around and ask: 'What could be the new reform program that will secure the next round of productivity growth in this country?' Against the background that the Hawke and Keating governments created the open competitive economy, having opened the door to competition from abroad and home, you cannot open that same door twice. So we cannot do that trick again. So what is the fundamental basis of a future round of productivity growth in this country? The answer is education. Education is the paramount source of productivity growth and the wealth of nations in the 21st century.

But this government's performance on education is absolutely abysmal. The Prime Minister is on record saying: 'I don't know why people are all obsessed with going to university. They should leave school early.' But the fact is that, as revealed in the Dusseldorf publication released just the other day, the situation of early school leavers is absolutely parlous. Twenty per cent of school leavers who had completed year 12 were not fully engaged in study or work compared with 40 per cent of year 11 completers and nearly 50 per cent of year 10 or below completers. The situation has deteriorated. The number of undergraduate Australian students coming into our universities has flatlined over the last 10 years. This government does not care about education. As a consequence, it is squandering the opportunity that has been given to it by the resources boom, and it should stand condemned for its negligence. (*Time expired*)

Road Safety

Mr SLIPPER (Fisher) (6.00 pm)—As we draw close to the end of another year, entering what is colloquially described as the ‘festive season’, I wish to raise the matter of safety on the roads during this time of the year. It is an extreme shame that the message to drivers to take heed of the ‘fatal four’ still has failed to make an impact with some drivers. The fatal four campaign identifies four special rules that, if obeyed, greatly reduce the possibilities of road accidents and consequent serious injury or death. These are rules that are even more critical given the high number of vehicles on the roads during the Christmas holiday season, as well as the significant number of motorists who are travelling long distances to be with loved ones over Christmas or to enjoy a break away at their favourite holiday destination. Often that favourite holiday destination is Queensland’s Sunshine Coast, which I am privileged to represent in the Australian parliament.

The fatal four campaign’s simple rules are: always wear a seatbelt, do not drink and drive, keep to the speed limit and do not drive while tired. The fatal four campaign is one whose results are immeasurable. It is impossible to know exactly how many lives have been saved because the drivers have heard these simple rules and taken heed of what they say. In the extreme majority of road accidents at least one of the fatal four has played a part.

The Sunshine Coast has had a horrid year on the roads. In the north coast region of Queensland, which covers an area from Redcliffe to Bundaberg, including the coast, there have been 58 deaths on our roads. Tragically, there have been eight deaths so far this month to 22 November. They include three teenagers who were killed when the car they were in smashed into a tree on a suburban road in Mountain Creek in the early hours of 18 November. It was heartbreaking to see the photos of the victims on the front page of the local newspaper.

These were lives that were taken needlessly and tragically as a result of a road accident. Four more people were killed in a six-day period in early October. Eight people have died in motorcycle crashes on the Sunshine Coast this year—the most recent on 5 November. There has been no shortage of tragedies involving teenagers on Australia’s roads this year. Just last week, three teens died in an accident in Western Sydney. There have also been accidents in Tasmania and near Byron Bay in which teenagers were the main victims.

Today I am adding my support to the growing number of Australians who are pleading with all drivers to slow down on our roads and to drive sensibly by obeying the road rules to give themselves the best chance of arriving at their destination safely. I appeal to all teenagers on the verge of getting the freedom that a drivers

licence brings: please be sensible; take your time, be patient and resist the urge to speed or do silly things. In Queensland at the moment, on the Sunshine Coast and the Gold Coast in particular, we have schoolies week. People who have left school obviously want to celebrate the conclusion of their secondary years, but it is particularly important at this time that they observe the messages of the fatal four campaign.

As a father of two teenagers—both of them now with drivers licences—I am aware on the one hand of the need to give our children the independence they require to get out and experience life, while on the other hand keeping a tight enough rein on them so that they will grow into mature adults learning to behave sensibly and safely when behind the wheel. Unfortunately, we cannot be with our children 24/7. We need to give them a certain amount of breathing space to allow them to learn things on their own and grow up as well-rounded individuals. It is a difficult balancing act when it comes to driving.

It is well documented that young people—males in particular—make up the larger proportion of those who lose their lives in crashes on our roads. Drivers aged under 21 have a death rate on our roads that is 10 times that of drivers aged over 40. Last year, in March, the Australian government announced a drivers education trial. It will start later this year in New South Wales and Victoria. The trial was the first stage in the plan by the government for a nationwide rollout, including Queensland, by 2007. The trial was one of the most comprehensive studies ever of teenage driver education. It will consist of 14,000 drivers—7,000 in both New South Wales and Victoria—and another 14,000 will be signed up to be used as a comparison group.

These programs and the statistics are all well and good, but there is nothing that should be more effective in guiding the attitudes of our young drivers as much as the support and advice of a loved one. It has been said that everyone makes mistakes while driving and that most are little things that are quickly corrected and have no lasting significance. It is unfortunate that things often done on the spur of the moment can have lasting consequences. On the roads, regrettably, it can mean permanent injury or even death.

So, I repeat my earlier plea to young drivers: make a conscious decision to take extra care on the roads but also to heed the words of your fathers, mothers, relatives and friends when they ask you to drive sensibly and to slow down. Unfortunately, I think many young people tend to think they are indestructible. They seem to think that while it can happen to other people it can never happen to them. It is important for young Australians, who are our nation’s future, to appreciate that they have their whole lives ahead of them.

At this stage I would like to thank the Australian government for making significant funding contribu-

tions to address black spots in my electorate of Fisher. Recently, I was able to announce that \$375,000 from the \$44.5 million AusLink black spot program had been allocated to my electorate. This money was allocated to the installation of a single-lane roundabout at the intersection of Memorial Avenue and Third Avenue at Maroochydore at a cost of \$115,000; the construction of a single-lane roundabout at the Mons Road on-ramp at Forest Glen, with building costs of \$240,000; and the remodelling of traffic signals at the intersection of Maltman Street and Queen Street in Caloundra at a price of \$20,000.

These funding announcements follow previous black spot funding allocations of \$220,000 late last year. These funds went toward the following projects: the installation of a roundabout at the intersection of Mary Street and Arthur Street, Caloundra, at a cost of \$50,000; the installation of traffic lights at the corner of Beerburum Street and Albatross Avenue, Caloundra, at a cost of \$75,000; kerb and channel modification works and dedicated left turn lane on the Mons Road and Tanawha Tourist Drive intersection in Buderim, at a cost of \$15,000; and, significant roadworks at the corner of Mons Road and Parsons Road, Buderim, to help improve sight distance and upgrade lighting and signage, at a total cost of \$80,000.

This black spot road funding program is now in its 11th year and continues to ensure work is carried out at some of the high-risk accident areas across the nation. It is money the Australian government is kicking in because the state governments are simply not putting in the funds necessary to remove an adequate number of black spots. The removal of black spots clearly saves Australian lives.

It has been reported that some 700 dangerous crash sites in Queensland have been eliminated since 1996 through funding of more than \$88.5 million through this vital program. I am told that an evaluation indicated that this returned around \$14 in benefit for every \$1 invested and prevented at least 32 fatalities and more than 1,500 serious injuries in its first three years alone. In recognition of the success of the AusLink black spot program, the Australian government has extended the program for a further two years, from 2006-07 to 2007-08, at a cost of \$90 million.

However, the best roads will be of little value if drivers do not drive to the conditions and stick to the speed limits. It is a sobering fact that the majority of serious car accidents have causes that are preventable if we use our common sense and drive to the conditions. I urge all drivers to be patient and careful and to heed the fatal four. If we were able to get this message out amongst the Australian community, Australia's road toll would be substantially reduced and the trauma that follows the maiming and loss of lives, often young lives, would be avoided. It really is important to get

that message out. As elected representatives, it is absolutely vital that wherever possible we encourage young drivers in Australia to drive carefully and to be careful to make sure that they observe the messages of the fatal four to avoid becoming a statistic. Statistics are all too often avoidable. Let us do whatever we can as a community to reduce the road toll. (*Time expired*)

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Hatton)—Order! The time for the grievance debate has expired. The debate is interrupted and I put the question:

That grievances be noted.

Question agreed to.

LEGISLATION

DR STONE (Murray—Minister for Workforce Participation) (6.10 pm)—I present the following documents:

Anti-Money Laundering and Counter-Terrorism Financing Bill 2006—Replacement explanatory memorandum.

Anti-Money Laundering and Counter-Terrorism Financing Bill 2006—Correction to the replacement explanatory memorandum.

Anti-Money Laundering and Counter-Terrorism Financing (Transitional Provisions and Consequential Amendments) Bill 2006—Correction to the explanatory memorandum.

Customs Legislation Amendment (New Zealand Rules of Origin) Bill 2006—Correction to the explanatory memorandum.

BROADCASTING LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL (No. 1) 2006

BROADCASTING LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (DIGITAL TELEVISION) BILL 2006

BROADCASTING SERVICES AMENDMENT (MEDIA OWNERSHIP) BILL 2006

CRIMES ACT AMENDMENT (FORENSIC PROCEDURES) BILL (No. 1) 2006

COMMUNICATIONS LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (ENFORCEMENT POWERS) BILL 2006

HIGHER EDUCATION LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (2006 BUDGET AND OTHER MEASURES) BILL 2006

LONG SERVICE LEAVE (COMMONWEALTH EMPLOYEES) AMENDMENT BILL 2006

TELEVISION LICENCE FEES AMENDMENT BILL 2006

CORPORATIONS (ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER) BILL 2006

CORPORATIONS (ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER) CONSEQUENTIAL, TRANSITIONAL AND OTHER MEASURES BILL 2006

CORPORATIONS AMENDMENT (ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER CORPORATIONS) BILL 2006

MEDICAL INDEMNITY LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2006

SCHOOLS ASSISTANCE (LEARNING TOGETHER—ACHIEVEMENT THROUGH CHOICE AND OPPORTUNITY) AMENDMENT BILL (No. 2) 2006

CUSTOMS TARIFF AMENDMENT (2007 HARMONIZED SYSTEM CHANGES) BILL 2006

CUSTOMS AMENDMENT (2007 HARMONIZED SYSTEM CHANGES) BILL 2006

TRADE PRACTICES LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL (NO. 1) 2006

PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE AMENDMENT BILL 2006

AGED CARE AMENDMENT (RESIDENTIAL CARE) BILL 2006

FINANCIAL TRANSACTION REPORTS AMENDMENT BILL 2006

Assent

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

AUSTRALIAN PARTICIPANTS IN BRITISH NUCLEAR TESTS (TREATMENT) BILL 2006

AUSTRALIAN PARTICIPANTS IN BRITISH NUCLEAR TESTS (TREATMENT) (CONSEQUENTIAL AMENDMENTS AND TRANSITIONAL PROVISIONS) BILL 2006

MARITIME LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (PREVENTION OF POLLUTION FROM SHIPS) BILL 2006

HOUSING LOANS INSURANCE CORPORATION (TRANSFER OF ASSETS AND ABOLITION) REPEAL BILL 2006

HOUSING LOANS INSURANCE CORPORATION (TRANSFER OF PRE-TRANSFER CONTRACTS) BILL 2006

DEFENCE FORCE (HOME LOANS ASSISTANCE) AMENDMENT BILL 2006

NATIONAL CATTLE DISEASE ERADICATION ACCOUNT AMENDMENT BILL 2006

Returned from the Senate

Message received from the Senate returning the bills without amendment or request.

COMMITTEES

Australian Crime Commission Committee

Membership

The SPEAKER—Mr Speaker has received a message from the Senate informing the House that Senator Bartlett has been appointed a member of the Parlia-

mentary Joint Committee on the Australian Crime Commission.

ENVIRONMENT AND HERITAGE LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (ANTARCTIC SEALS AND OTHER MEASURES) BILL 2006

First Reading

Bill received from the Senate, and read a first time.

Ordered that the second reading be made an order of the day for the next sitting.

EXPORT FINANCE AND INSURANCE CORPORATION AMENDMENT BILL 2006

First Reading

Bill received from the Senate, and read a first time.

Ordered that the second reading be made an order of the day for the next sitting.

PROHIBITION OF HUMAN CLONING FOR REPRODUCTION AND THE REGULATION OF HUMAN EMBRYO RESEARCH AMENDMENT BILL 2006

First Reading

Bill received from the Senate, and read a first time.

Ordered that the second reading be made an order of the day for the next sitting.

CHILD SUPPORT LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (REFORM OF THE CHILD SUPPORT SCHEME—NEW FORMULA AND OTHER MEASURES) BILL 2006

Consideration of Senate Message

Bill returned from the Senate with amendments.

Ordered that the amendments be considered immediately.

Senate's amendments—

- (1) Schedule 1, item 1, page 55 (line 29) to page 56 (line 2), omit subsection 65B(2) and the note, substitute:
- (2) The parent making the application must provide evidence to the Registrar concerning the parent's income (within the meaning of subsection 66A(4)) to demonstrate that his or her current income is:
 - (a) less than the pension PP (single) maximum basic amount; and
 - (b) that it would be unjust and inequitable to expect him or her to pay the amount assessed under this section.
- (3) An assessment issued by the Commissioner of Taxation for the last relevant year of income shall not be sufficient evidence of the income of the parent for the purposes of this section.
- (4) If the parent makes an application, the Registrar may determine in writing that the section not apply to the parent if the parent's current income (within the meaning of subsection 66A(4)) is less than the pension PP (single) maximum basic amount and it would be unjust and inequitable to

expect him or her to pay the amount assessed under this section.

Note: If the Registrar refuses to grant an application under this section, the Registrar must serve a notice on the applicant under section 66C.

(2) Schedule 3, item 69, page 157 (after line 13), at the end of section 103W, add:

(4) The SSAT must not make a decision by consent under subsection (2) or (3) in relation to a departure from administrative assessment of child support in accordance with Part 6A of the Act unless it is satisfied that it is just and equitable and otherwise proper to do so, having regard to the matters set out in subsections 117(4) and (5).

(3) Schedule 5, item 28, page 214 (after line 17), at the end of section 136, add:

(5) If:

- (a) the court sets aside a child support agreement under this section; and
- (b) the court is not satisfied as mentioned in paragraph 117(1)(b) (departure orders); and
- (c) the payee has received or will receive benefits pursuant to the agreement;

the court may still make an order that departs from the administrative assessment where it is just and equitable to do so, having regard to the benefits that the payee has already received pursuant to the agreement.

Mr BROUGH (Longman—Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Indigenous Affairs) (6.15 pm)—I move:

That the amendments be agreed to.

The government supports the amendments made in the Senate. They are based on a submission made by Professor Patrick Parkinson, Chairman of the Ministerial Taskforce on Child Support, to the Senate Community Affairs Committee. They make minor changes to the bill by clarifying provisions about evidence of income where fixed payment is being imposed on a payer who is not on income support but reports to a very low income, ensuring that the SSAT is guided by the same considerations as the registrar in departing from a formula assessment and ensuring that the courts have sufficient flexibility to take account of benefits already received by a payee parent under a child support agreement when setting aside the agreement.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Hatton)—The question is that the amendments be agreed to.

Question agreed to.

BUSINESS

Rearrangement

Dr STONE (Murray—Minister for Workforce Participation) (6.16 pm)—I move:

That business intervening before order of the day No. 11, government business, be postponed until a later hour this day.

Question agreed to.

ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER HERITAGE PROTECTION AMENDMENT BILL 2005

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 2 November, on motion by **Mr Hunt**:

That this bill be now read a second time.

upon which **Mr Albanese** moved by way of amendment:

That all words after “That” be omitted with a view to substituting the following words:

“while not declining to give the bill a second reading, the House:

- (1) notes that on 20 August 2003, then Leader of the Government in the Senate Senator Robert Hill stated in relation to Indigenous heritage protection that the Government recognised the shortcomings in the existing system, that reform was long overdue and that the government was anxious to have a new and better piece of legislation put in place as quickly as possible;
- (2) registers its concern that the Howard Government has failed to address the shortcomings in indigenous heritage protection;
- (3) expresses its concern that the Howard Government has failed to act on the recommendations of the 1996 Evatt Inquiry into the Commonwealth Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Act 1984;
- (4) notes that it is now 10 years since the Evatt Inquiry reported, and calls for a comprehensive review of Indigenous heritage protection, and
- (5) calls on the Government to support the inclusion of a sunset exemption provision in the bill”.

Mr GARRETT (Kingsford Smith) (6.17 pm)—I rise to support the second reading amendment moved by the member for Grayndler and to note in relation to this **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Amendment Bill 2005** that there seems to be very little legislation that comes through the House on Indigenous matters that is not tainted by extreme ideology or narrow wedge politics. This legislation is as good an example as any that we have seen recently.

This bill has been too long in coming. It has arrived in an incomplete form, which is a very great pity considering the importance of securing adequate and consistent recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage and its recognition henceforth. Notwithstanding the deficiencies in the legislation, Labor does support the general principles of the bill. Labor does support efforts to improve existing legislation, including to give more certainty to cultural loan arrangements and to provide for the Victorian government to administer its own Aboriginal heritage protec-

tion register. But it is clear that the government has not adequately addressed all the shortcomings that were a part of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Act.

Minister Hill originally stated that reform was long overdue—and it was—but this bill fails to deliver reform which significantly improves and enhances the protection of Indigenous heritage. That is of real concern to us on this side of the House. In August 2003, Minister Hill stated:

We are anxious to have a new and better piece of legislation put in place as quickly as possible.

Three years later, judging by the bill in front of us, the government has not fulfilled its commitment to a ‘better piece of legislation’.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Act 1984 was originally intended as a stop-gap measure. The Evatt inquiry reported on the act in 1996. I will come to that in a moment, but it has been noted that the legislation was inadequate to deal with the national approach required for the Commonwealth’s heritage obligations. In fact, this act has been described as the ‘act of last resort’. A Senate minority report also considered the bill and pointed out that, of the 200 applications since 1984, only 22 have been declared for recognition and inclusion on the list and only one during the term of the Howard government. So, just as reconciliation lies dead in the water under this government, so, regrettably, does a genuine commitment to recognising and applying the appropriate legislative protective and recognition framework that Indigenous heritage deserves.

The failure by the government to ensure practical implementation of the provisions via listing means that the protection act is virtually defunct legislation. If there are so few sites that come into province and are applied for by this government, then the heritage protection act has become virtually defunct in the life of the Howard government. The Senate minority report on the legislation and its record actually argued that it appears to have been the intention of the Commonwealth to confine its statutory involvement in Indigenous issues to the EPBC Act while ignoring the ATSIHP Act.

The effect of this is that two implications apply for Indigenous heritage. The first is that, at the time when the Senate minority report was brought down, the EPBC Act was clearly much narrower in its scope, and the proposed amended act that subsequently came into the parliament is even narrower as a consequence. It is confined, for example, to matters of international significance, of national significance and of places located in Commonwealth areas. There will be many instances of places of Indigenous heritage that do not fall within that narrow purview. Those limitations that I have just described do not apply to the ATSIHP Act.

The second is that, as has been noted in the House previously, the Howard government has administered the national and Commonwealth heritage lists in a way that, in fact, makes it difficult for Indigenous sites to be included. The stringent criteria that seem to have been applied by the Howard government preclude identifying and including an Indigenous site as worthy unless it also has significance to the wider community. This way of reading the principle of inclusion under this legislation has meant that Aboriginal sites which are significant and important for their Aboriginal context, history and meaning have not come onto the list.

In July 2004, the Minister for the Environment and Heritage, Senator Ian Campbell, flagged a number of sites for priority consideration for inclusion on the National Heritage List. Those sites he listed included Castlemaine Diggings, the South Australian old and new parliament houses, the Port Arthur Historic Site, Mawson’s Huts, Point Cook, Point Nepean—all of those sites worthy of inclusion—the Dampier Archipelago art site, the Brewarrina fish traps and the Wave Hill walk-off site. At present the list contains all of the abovementioned sites—in other words, those items that I have just identified—with the exception of the Wave Hill walk-off site, the Damper Archipelago art site on the Burrup Peninsula in Western Australia and Point Cook.

Three months ago, on 22 August, was the 40th anniversary of the noted Wave Hill walk-off. This is a historic event with great significance for the Indigenous population as well as for the wider community. The Wave Hill walk-off site was identified by the minister previously. In 1966 Vincent Lingiari and others in that community had protested against the unfair treatment and conditions faced by Aboriginal workers on the Vestey cattle station in the Northern Territory. They were not satisfied with the conditions at the time, and they walked off the land and camped in Wattie Creek. Parliament noted the Wave Hill walk-off earlier this year and, of course, the member for Lingiari’s electorate is named after Vincent Lingiari.

The events at Wave Hill changed the face of Australia—there is no question about that—and were instrumental in the ensuing historic campaign that saw the introduction of land rights laws in the Northern Territory. These were land rights laws which were vehemently opposed by conservative political forces and conservative political parties both at the federal level and at the territory level. Notwithstanding that, the events at Wave Hill were of significant historic occasion; they were of real historic importance. So it was particularly disappointing that, earlier this year, the environment minister failed to mark the important anniversary of the Wave Hill walk-off by, in fact, listing Wave Hill and the site on the National Heritage List—even though two years earlier he had announced that its

inclusion would be given priority consideration. It could be argued that, whatever political viewpoint one brings to assessing history, the Wave Hill site in and of itself is a site deserving of recognition. Indeed, it is hard to think of a place in the Top End with a more extraordinary history.

In his speech in the Senate on 11 May 2006, my colleague Senator Carr posed the question to the government: will the 40th anniversary of the actual walk-off itself, coming up on 22 August, come and go without any acknowledgement by the government? Senator Carr was correct. He and many of us on this side of the House constantly identify and unfortunately have to remind the public that, no, when it comes to matters of genuine Indigenous significance in the Aboriginal history of this country, this government simply does not want to pay any attention at all.

The government does itself no credit by playing politics in this way. The Prime Minister is on the record as decrying what he calls the 'black armband view of history'. That is a very strongly contested assertion here. But what we have is actually worse—that is, a government using its legislative authority on the basis of its ideological prejudice to simply pretend that history does not exist, to deny that something has any Aboriginal significance and to not provide it with the recognition that it ought to have under Commonwealth legislation. The Northern Territory government has provided for appropriate recognition of the Wave Hill site. It is a site that is visited by tourists. It is a site that has significant and ongoing history. But it is a site that involved unions and Aboriginal people fighting for their rights and, as a consequence, the government does not see fit to give it recognition.

The other site flagged for priority consideration is the Dampier Archipelago art site, which is on the Burrup Peninsula in Western Australia. I know that some speakers have made reference to this site. It is an extraordinary site in that it houses an estimated one million petroglyphs, including Australia's biggest collection of standing stones and the largest example of rock carvings in the world. There are some genuine planning challenges afoot regarding this site because it is intended that there be significant industrial activity on Burrup. But a number of significant concerns have been raised by Indigenous groups who are seeking the guarantee of protection of these petroglyphs. The archaeological and heritage community and I think the wider community, as it becomes aware of the significance of the Dampier Archipelago art collection, are also concerned about the possibility of further destruction or removal of rock art from the site.

I do note calls by the member for Fremantle and the member for Pearce, amongst others, to call upon Woodside, the proponent for the development on the site, to reconsider its plans to build a pipeline and

processing plant on two sites on the Burrup Peninsula. I also note that the joint North West Shelf partners—that is, BP, Shell, BHP Billiton, Chevron and Japan Australia LNG—have all indicated a willingness to work together to consider whether there may be a location for the proposed development by Woodside which does not significantly impact on the heritage and the rock art on the site. I certainly would encourage discussions between Woodside and the joint partners, because I think that, in actual fact, this particular area of rock art is of immense national and international significance and is a great heritage for the nation. It is important for Indigenous people that we recognise the worth of their narrative drawings and their rock art but also, given the scope and expanse of the rock art on the Burrup Peninsula, that it has international significance as well. It would be important in that context—given that the Dampier art located on the Burrup Peninsula could be identified by the minister as necessary to be recognised in this way and placed on the National Heritage List—that he would actually look to do that.

Regrettably, the Minister for the Environment and Heritage is not fulfilling his responsibilities under the existing legislation. Two or three days ago he announced that he now intends to delay consideration of the inclusion of this site on the list for a year or more—and the proposed amendments that have travelled through this House on the EPBC Act actually give him even greater scope to ignore the heritage significance of the rock art on Burrup. I think subsequent generations will look extremely poorly at a minister exercising his responsibilities in such a deficient way.

Just to reinforce how important the Dampier archipelago is in terms of the rock engravings and rock art there, there has been an Australian Heritage Commission assessment process that has looked in some detail at the natural and cultural values of the art and the work that is on the Burrup. That assessment is in the hands of the minister for the environment, and it does identify the Dampier archipelago as one of the richest and most exciting, as well as densest, concentrations of rock engravings in the world. That is a very significant identification by the Australian Heritage Commission. I note that former Minister Barnett in Western Australia has also said that we need to look again at the importance of conserving a rock art precinct of this kind.

There are three nominations identified by the Australian Heritage Commission. The first is for the Dampier rock art precinct, which comprises the largest concentration of petroglyphs, or rock carvings, in the world and the largest number of megaliths, or stone arrangements, in Australia. It says that 'this quintessentially Australian and entirely unique cultural property is an utterly sacred place and should be to all Australians'. The second nomination notes the precinct has 'significance for the whole Australian nation because it

is the largest Indigenous cultural property within Australia'. The third nomination is of the Burrup peninsula and associated islands and coastal strip, which comprise unique landscapes of granite and granitoid rocks with the world's largest and prolific collections of Aboriginal engravings and artefacts. The stakes are terribly high that we as a nation ensure the best possible protection of an area of significance such as this.

I note in passing that the minister, whilst delaying any decision to consider the nomination that I have just described from the Australian Heritage Commission, has also in effect ruled out considering the listing for the Aboriginal tent embassy in the front of this parliament, despite its crucial historical role in the land rights campaigns of the past and its ongoing role as a meeting place and, hopefully, in the future, a possible cultural centre for Aboriginal people from Australia and worldwide.

What is needed is for legislation that seeks to identify and adequately protect places of Indigenous significance to be brought through by this government, and this legislation does not fulfilled this task. Heritage protection is too important to become hostage to culture wars or short-term political reactions that are challenging for the government. In the case of the Burrup Peninsula, there is a powerful argument that its important heritage and cultural values need to be adequately and resolutely protected. We note the failure of the government to fulfil its earlier commitments to consult with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities on the broad amendments in this legislation. I support the member for Grayndler's second reading amendment, and I call on the government to ensure the adequate protection of the Dampier rock art site already identified by the Australian Heritage Commission assessment processes. (*Time expired*)

Mr SLIPPER (Fisher) (6.34 pm)—I am particularly pleased to have the opportunity of speaking on the [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Amendment Bill 2005](#). As a nation we must from time to time remind ourselves of the unique heritage we have here through the culture of our Indigenous people. In a world that, through the advances of technology, communication, travel and the like, seems to be becoming smaller, it is not difficult to lose track of the wonderful things that we have right here at home, and Indigenous objects that have cultural and artistic significance are among them.

I have to say that I do enjoy collecting Indigenous art. I cannot pretend that I have any particularly expensive art in my collection, some of which hangs in my electorate office and other parts of which hang at home. I have one friend—Ken Hinds, who happens to be the Fisher FEC chairman—who is a dedicated collector of Indigenous art. Some of the works by Possum and others that he has in his collection are most in-

credible. By collecting Indigenous art in this way, Mr Hinds not only recognises the uniqueness of this art to Australia but also protects this art for the enjoyment of future generations. Mr Hinds often allows his art to be placed on public display so that others are able to enjoy the beauty of Indigenous art of a very high quality. I might add that Mr Hinds has a most impressive art collection—not merely an Indigenous art collection. He has collected for many years and has possibly one of the most significant collections anywhere in Australia.

Indigenous art is a form of art that is not only beautiful but is also historical, meaningful and spiritual. The Australian government is committed to the protection of Australia's Indigenous heritage and the many artefacts, sacred sites and traditions that it encompasses. By adopting these principles, we are also able to spread the word of our Indigenous history and help to educate our future generations. In fact, legislative protections for Indigenous art and artefacts will also directly aid and promote the protection of Indigenous culture, heritage and tradition, which of course are part of Australia's history and part of Australia today.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Amendment Bill 2005 being debated today aims to update the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Act 1984, which was introduced predominantly as a legislative means of safeguarding places and objects that have significance to our Indigenous people, and for various related purposes. This bill, for example, further strengthens protections for Indigenous artefacts, in that it specifically provides for improving the safeguards for those artefacts which are legitimately held by overseas entities but which are lent back to Australia for display or exhibition. This bill allows them in due course to be able to leave the country to return to their owners hassle free. The absence of adequate safeguards for the safe return of these items has in the past been a stumbling block to having the overseas owners of Indigenous artefacts allow them to come to Australia so that they can be admired by Australians and those living here. The fact that this change is being made to the legislation means that overseas owners of Indigenous art will be confident in knowing that they will be able to lend these beautiful objects for display in Australia but not have any problem in having them returned.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Act 1984 sets out in detail the strict guidelines for dealings with Aboriginal artefacts, sacred sites, Aboriginal remains and so on. It outlines the definitions by which we can determine, for example, whether a sacred site has been desecrated, as well as definitions for sacred sites, Indigenous traditions and customs, and artefacts. The aid organisation World Vision, through its website, noted:

Contemporary Indigenous painting has emerged as one of the most significant international art movements of the late 20th century. Interest in Australian Indigenous art continues to rise, with demands from major museums and galleries across the globe.

It goes on to note that earlier this year—that is, in June—the work of eight artists of Indigenous heritage featured in the major installation in the spectacular new national museum in Paris, France and that significant sale price records have been set recently for Indigenous art. The same can be said for Indigenous artefacts such as spears and boomerangs. They are uniquely Australian and therefore command attention the world over. It is only fitting that we here in Australia be given reasonable and sensible access to those items housed overseas.

This situation has arisen as a consequence of the growing importance of Australia's Indigenous artefacts and art overseas as well as here at home. It is in fact an encouraging development because it has come about only because of the ever-increasing international interest in Australian Indigenous art and culture. The bill also removes a portion of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Act 1984 that had the unintended consequence of restricting the Victorian government's ability to make its own changes to Indigenous protections in its state. The Victorian government had requested that change and, in the interest of sensible and effective legislative management of Indigenous heritage, those sections have been removed. This means that Victoria will be treated the same as other jurisdictions in Australia. This bill supports improvements to the protection and promotion of Indigenous heritage, and I am particularly pleased to commend it to the House.

Ms HOARE (Charlton) (6.41 pm)—The proposed amendments to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Act contained in the **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Amendment Bill 2005** are useful and important in shoring up the legislative arrangements concerning the import and export of protected cultural material. These amendments will ensure that such valuable exchange of cultural artefacts as currently takes place between Australia and the rest of the world can continue without fear of conflict such as that which arose in 2004 between the Museum of Victoria and the Djadja Wurrung people over the importation of artefacts which the Djadja Wurrung subsequently claimed ownership of. As we know, the court rejected the Djadja Wurrung people's claim to these objects, establishing a legal precedent which these amendments will further solidify by exempting artefacts imported under a section 12 certificate from claim under the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Act.

The removal of part IIA from the act is also a useful step, bringing as it will cohesiveness of legislation

throughout the country, with Victoria falling into line with the rest of the states and the Commonwealth then being able to better fulfil its designated role as a body of last resort, to be called upon only when state and territory laws are not deemed adequate to protect important sites and artefacts. However, these amendments represent only cosmetic changes to an act which is deeply flawed in many ways and which is in need of far greater revision if we are truly to take seriously the conservation and preservation of our Indigenous heritage.

The blueprint for how we could best go about this has been in existence for as long as this government has been in power. In 1996 Justice Elizabeth Evatt's report laid bare this act's flaws and provided an extensive list of recommendations which, had they been implemented, would have led to more comprehensive protection for Indigenous lands and artefacts today. It would have removed many of the obstacles which currently face the Indigenous community when they seek protection under this act. Predictably, however, the government has chosen not to act on these recommendations. The Evatt report lists four primary areas of concern, not one of which is in any way addressed by these amendments. These are:

1. The uncertainty and delays caused by a system where the interaction between Commonwealth and State/Territory processes are not clearly defined—a situation which creates confusion over how applications for protection are to be handled without infringing on the rights and powers of the States;
2. A lack of transparency and openness which gives no assurance that all parties are given fair and equal treatment, leaving the Minister's supposedly binding decisions open to legal challenge;
3. The order of the protection application process, which means that Indigenous communities can only apply for protection for lands after development or planning proposals have been already approved, not while they are still being considered; and
4. A most regrettable lack of Indigenous involvement in the entire decision-making process.

As well as identifying the act's central weaknesses, the Evatt report also provides practical and pertinent recommendations as to how these can be addressed. It is simply beyond belief that the government should have in its possession viable solutions to these important problems and yet still do nothing to address them.

In the first instance, the Evatt report calls for the setting up of a national body to monitor the management and conservation of our Indigenous heritage at all levels—local, state and federal. While the Commonwealth would continue to occupy its role as a body of final appeal, this national body would ensure better understanding and cooperation between the different legislative bodies, thus doing away with much of the confusion and uncertainty which currently characterises rela-

tion between the states and the Commonwealth on these issues.

The second recommendation, and one which is particularly relevant to the current subsections 16 and 24 amendments, concerns disclosure of information. At present, Indigenous people can be required to provide information which is considered sensitive within their communities, and for which there may be penalties for disclosure, in order to obtain the protection of the act. While Labor supports the removal of sections requiring the disclosure of sensitive information for the purposes of part IIA of the act, the fact remains that the act will still require Indigenous people to disclose a range of information concerning the location, significance and purpose of sites and artefacts which are considered sacred and not for public disclosure in order to gain any measure of protection from the act.

Thirdly, the report calls for a range of reforms to broaden the various state legislation to bring it into line with Commonwealth standards, including the accreditation of more Indigenous bodies to represent their communities on these issues, and minimum standards of protection to be offered by the states. I will not waste the House's time by listing each of these specific reforms in detail, as the report is publicly available for anyone who seeks to become better informed on this issue. Let me state, however, that at present there is often a wide gulf between the protections afforded by the states and those deemed appropriate by the Commonwealth, and bridging this gulf would go a long way to ensuring that the states can effectively deal with these issues without needing the Commonwealth's final judgement. Finally, Justice Evatt's report states:

The question whether an area or site should be considered an area or site of particular significance according to Aboriginal tradition should be regarded as a subjective issue to be determined on the basis of an assessment of the degree of intensity of belief and feeling of Aboriginal people about that area or site and its significance.

The requirement that Indigenous communities justify their request for protection of their heritage under the act by proving some kind of 'national interest' is simply ridiculous. It is true that many of these sites and cultural objects will not necessarily have great significance to the non-Indigenous community, but why should this mean that they are not worthy of protection? The preservation of our Indigenous heritage and the traditions of our Indigenous people should always be in our national interest, whether or not the specific sites or objects mean anything to us individually. It should be enough for Indigenous communities to establish the significance of the site or artefact to their own communities.

Such a requirement that the Indigenous community account for themselves and their beliefs according to standards imposed by a government out of touch with Indigenous communities and interest is emblematic of

its disgraceful attitude towards Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations. We are all familiar with the statistics which testify to the disadvantage of Indigenous people at every level—education, health, life span and employment. How are we to even begin to rectify these things when the government has such a fundamental lack of understanding about how best to work with Indigenous communities?

How are we to genuinely engage with this key section of our society if we insist on perpetuating a culture of exclusivity which forces Aboriginal people to speak our narrow political language or to be left out entirely? Protecting our Indigenous heritage is just part of a larger process of engagement with this country's Indigenous peoples. By demonstrating that we too value what is sacred to Indigenous people, that we too value the preservation of our nation's history, we would show that our commitment to involving the Indigenous community in this country's future is much more than empty rhetoric.

Of course, this government has demonstrated neither a commitment to protecting our past nor much interest in building a viable future through the fostering of strong links between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities. This is evident from its refusal to address the root causes of the inequality which still exists everywhere in our society—from its total lack of concern for the destruction of culturally significant sites and land, as is evident by the minute number of protection orders which have actually been issued under this act, and, of course, from its refusal to apologise to those individuals and communities who were disadvantaged in the past by the ignorant and racist policies of former governments. It is also blindingly obvious from the ludicrously outdated and paternalistic proposals which members on the other side of the House continue to come up with, including Minister Brough's recent statement on the issue of access permits for Aboriginal lands.

It may seem that this act is concerned only with a specific, tangible aspect of Commonwealth legislation, but there is a broader issue at stake here: whether, by acknowledging the importance of our Indigenous history through the preservation of its sites and artefacts, we send a strong message to Indigenous communities that we are keen to work with them and acknowledge the central place their history and beliefs should hold in our society; or whether, as this government has consistently done in the past, we display a complete lack of concern for either the people themselves or their history by failing to protect that which is sacred to them.

In short, I see little to oppose in the present bill. As has been stated by others on this side of the House, it does away with some niggling legislative problems and simplifies the system greatly by bringing Victoria in line with the rest of the country. However, these

changes are simply inadequate in addressing the real problems of this act which, as I have just outlined, are pervasive and impact upon its implementation at all levels. While I recognise the government's initiative in taking steps to modify the act, I call upon it to be more proactive and to address the real issues here rather than simply to fiddle at the edges as it is currently doing and has been doing for a very long time now. In conclusion, having that as a basis, I urge the government to support the member for Grayndler's amendment, which would provide for a more comprehensive set of changes to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Act.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. BK Bishop)—I remind the House that this is a wide-ranging debate and I think I have been reasonably tolerant in the latitude that I have permitted, but I would remind speakers that their speeches should at least have some connection to the bill and to the subject matter of the bill. I call the honourable member for Banks.

Mr MELHAM (Banks) (6.51 pm)—The purpose of the **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Amendment Bill 2005** is to amend the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Act 1984 and the Aboriginal Land (Lake Condah and Framlingham Forest) Act 1987. When the bill was introduced, the second reading speech went through a number of matters. I do not seek to repeat those, but the general outline in the explanatory memorandum covers it. It says:

The purpose of this Bill is to amend the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Act 1984 ... in order to:

- (a) provide greater certainty to international cultural loan arrangements by ensuring that declarations made under the Act cannot act to prevent the return of objects imported temporarily to Australia with a certificate of exemption under the Protection of Movable Cultural Heritage Act 1986;
- (b) provide for the repeal of Part IIA and other provisions in the Act that only apply to places in Victoria to enable the Victorian Government to administer Aboriginal heritage protection in Victoria directly through its own legislation; and
- (c) bring the Act into line with the Legislative Instruments Act 2003 by making amendments to clarify which class of instruments contained in the Act are non-exempt legislative instruments for the purposes of the Legislative Instruments Act 2003 and, accordingly, subject to its provisions.

It is a limited amendment bill. I suppose that is where some of the general criticism arises, because the government still has not acted on its undertakings. Indeed, when I was the shadow minister in 1998 there was some toing and froing, with a new bill introduced and a number of substantive changes to the current act proposed. Some amendments in relation to heritage pro-

tection were insisted upon by the opposition. At the time, I had some things to say about the Labor Party's approach. I will come back to that shortly. In my view, the approach that I outlined then is the approach that still should apply.

Subsequent to that, on 20 August 2003 the then Leader of the Government in the Senate, Senator Robert Hill, stated that the government recognised the shortcomings in the existing system in respect of heritage protection, that reform was long overdue and that the government was anxious to put a new and better piece of legislation in place as quickly as possible. I think that arose out of the Liberal Party policy on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs, which was released on 14 February 1996. It is worth while quoting from that document, because the then opposition certainly made a lot of noise and jumped up and down about Indigenous heritage. The relevant page of the Liberal Party's policy, in terms of background, said:

Although the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Act was introduced as a temporary measure over a decade ago, Labor has failed to review it.

The Labor Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs has refused to adhere to his own responsibilities under the Act. As a consequence, the Federal Court has overturned his decisions on both the Broome Crocodile Farm and the Hindmarsh Island Bridge.

Taxpayers have paid a high cost for the Minister's disregard of his own Act, and Indigenous heritage has suffered because of the mistrust and controversy that has surrounded his decisions, particularly in the case of Hindmarsh Island.

In criticising the Labor Minister's failure to administer the Act correctly, the Courts have found that he failed to uphold his obligation to ensure natural justice.

In a panic response during the run up to the election in October 1995 the Minister belatedly announced his intention to review the Act.

That was the Evatt review, which subsequently reported on 21 June 1996. The coalition policy said:

In Government the Coalition will:

- (a) review the Heritage Act;
- (b) ensure that mechanisms are in place to guarantee natural justice, thereby avoiding ministerial decisions like those recently overturned by the Federal Court;
- (c) seek a meeting of State and Territory Ministers for Aboriginal Affairs to:
 - (i) determine ways to ensure that traditional culture and religious beliefs are properly protected.

That is a pretty keynote commitment and goes to the heart of it. It continued:

- (ii) seek a better integration of Commonwealth and States/Territories Acts so that the Commonwealth Heritage Act takes into account State/Territory processes while retaining its role as a forum of last resort; and

- (iii) encourage States/Territories to review their own Acts to bring about greater consistency across Australia.

The current act is deficient. This government gave commitments before it was elected, and it gave commitments after it was elected, that it would review and upgrade the act to bring about those principles. It has not done that.

The amendment bill before us in a lot of respects is not objectionable, because it overcomes the situation of Victoria not having legislation and the Commonwealth covering the field. The Victorian government wrote to the Australian government this year to explore how the obstacle could be removed to allow a proposed new Victorian cultural heritage legislation to be put in place. And that is fair enough. In relation to the other matters, it is interesting because, in effect, there have been a number of court cases about the items on loan from other institutions. On this legislation, the *Bills Digest* gives quite a good history and summary of the difficult and sensitive issue that arose in Victoria after the staging of an exhibition by Museum Victoria entitled *Etched on Bark 1854*. The amendments in schedule 1 are the result. They ensure that a section 12 certificate cannot be overridden by a declaration under the heritage protection act. The exhibition ran from 18 March 2004 to 27 June 2004. The exhibition notice stated:

The earliest surviving Aboriginal bark etchings in Australia, they are the only remaining examples of artistic work done by Kulin men from the Loddon and Murray Rivers during the nineteenth century. Two bark etchings have also been borrowed from the British Museum and the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew.

The *Bills Digest* says:

The items on loan from these institutions became the subject of temporary declarations—

and I note they were temporary declarations—

under the *Heritage Protection Act*. The Dja Dja Wurrung Group claimed traditional ownership of the items and their return was prevented by the operation of the declarations. Museum Victoria had contractual obligations to return the items to the institutions concerned as soon as the exhibition had finished but was unable to do so. Legal proceedings were then instituted in the Federal Court by Museum Victoria and elders of the Dja Dja Wurrung People.

There was a court case. The *Bills Digest* continues:

The items which were the subject of the court proceeding were, as stated by Justice Ryan in his judgement, two bark etchings originating in Dja Dja Wurrung country around Boort dating to about 1954. Another bark etching dating from the 1970s in Jupagalk Country in the Lake Tyrell area and a ceremonial emu figure made from river redgum and decorated with red and white ochres. The objects were due to be returned to the British Museum and the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, by 30 September 2004. A number of successive emergency declarations were obtained under the Heritage Protection Act by the Dja Dja Wurrung Native Title

Group. Museum Victoria took action in the Federal Court to review the decisions to make successive emergency declarations. Eight emergency declarations were made in all.

The case involved whether the inspector under the *Heritage Protection Act* had the power to make subsequent declarations after the first declaration in respect of the same objects after the first emergency declaration was made. The judge took the view that the inspector lacked the power to make the second and subsequent declarations. The case had the effect of removing the protective declarations that had operated on the objects.

All the legislation is doing is confirming the result of the court case. The matter was litigated, and the result determined that the second and subsequent declarations should not have been made. The legislation is unnecessary in a lot of respects. It is a decision by a single judge; it is not binding. So it would not stop subsequent applications being made. The bill before the House is designed for that instance. When museums and others are bringing in these objects, litigation cannot be commenced to stop them from going back.

The truth is that confirming what the courts have decided and not allowing anyone to bring declarations is hardly protection of Aboriginal culture and heritage; it is the reverse. It is in effect denying Aboriginal people the opportunity to go to court; it is taking away their standing to claim these cultural objects. That is a policy decision but it certainly goes against the grain of what the Heritage Protection Act should be all about.

The then Labor government in its dying days did seek a review of the Heritage Protection Act, which, as has been said, was supposed to be only a temporary measure. The purpose of the act was to preserve and protect from injury or desecration areas and objects that were of particular significance to Aboriginals in accordance with Aboriginal tradition. Indeed, coalition policy in 1996 recognised that. I repeat: they wanted to seek a meeting to determine ways to ensure that traditional culture and religious beliefs were properly protected. I suppose this is the criticism: the government has not acted on its pre-election and post-election commitments. The interesting thing is that not a lot of declarations have been made. I doubt that there would be many declarations made under this government or this minister, because I do not think there is a sensitivity for or an appreciation of the area of Aboriginal culture and religious beliefs for them to be properly protected.

Justice Evatt, in her report, said:

Aboriginal people consider that the Act has not protected their heritage. Few declarations have been made—

this is 1996—

and only one is now in force. They say that the administration of the Act has given too much deference to ineffective State and Territory processes which do not recognise their role in the identification, management and protection of heritage. In some situations negotiations by the Commonwealth

with the State/Territory government have resulted in arrangements being made without adequate consultation with Aboriginal people. In addition, the Act does not recognise that there are Aboriginal restrictions on information which play an important role in the protection and maintenance of their cultural heritage. The Act does not protect confidential information or respect Aboriginal spirituality and beliefs which require that confidentiality to be maintained. Its failure to deal with all aspects of heritage, including intellectual property was another subject of concern, though the Review has been unable to deal with this issue in detail ... Nor does the Act adequately recognise or provide for the involvement of Aboriginal people in negotiation and decision-making about their cultural heritage. Aboriginal people want the Act to be maintained and strengthened.

The opposition's second reading amendment seeks to highlight that. Those are my criticisms of the minimal scope of the legislation currently before the House. It is important in this area and, indeed, in the Indigenous area as a whole that the politicisation of Aboriginal affairs ceases. It is mainly the conservative elements of our society that seek to politicise and demonise people and to play to the fear and prejudice in the general community. We are seeing that in the migration area with the fear that is being generated about people who practise the Muslim religion within our community.

When I was shadow minister in charge of Indigenous affairs for the Labor Party, I had something to say. In 1998 it was a busy year in relation to the heritage protection act, because there was then a move by the government to bring in a new heritage act, which has not eventuated. I said that for me there were three fundamental principles that guided the Labor Party. I said:

The first was the aim of protecting indigenous heritage. We were about effective protection and transmission of what we regard as a living cultural heritage. It is fundamental to the survival of indigenous people as a distinct social group. It is an integral aspect of the way in which indigenous people's identity is continued in the context of non-indigenous economic and social development that is often ignorant of or hostile to indigenous culture and its relationship to the land.

This was a speech I made in consideration of a Senate message and unrelated matters on 9 December 1999. I continued:

The second principle we relied upon was the Evatt report as the appropriate compromise between indigenous and development interests. We believe the Evatt report on the review of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Act 1984 is the appropriate benchmark for the reform of Commonwealth, state and territory heritage laws. The report is the result of extensive consultations throughout Australia with indigenous and non-indigenous interests. It represents a careful compromise between development concerns and indigenous heritage protection.

I then said that the proposed amendments that we put up were based on the detailed recommendations of the Evatt report. I continued:

The third principle was the relationship between the Commonwealth, state and territory responsibilities to heritage

protection. The Commonwealth government has moral, constitutional and international responsibilities to provide heritage protection. Given the reality of the states' responsibility for land management and planning processes, we acknowledge that the states and territories have a role in relation to heritage protection; however, primary responsibility for the scope and operation of heritage laws must remain with the Commonwealth and the Commonwealth must remain a real option of last resort.

I do not make any apologies for saying that, because in my opinion the results of the 1967 referendum, which had the support of 90 per cent of the people who voted in it, gave the Commonwealth the moral and legal responsibility to protect Aboriginal people; in most instances, to protect them from the states, which for two-thirds of the last century—and this has continued—have not in many instances acted in their best interests.

I think on the face of it, from an opposition point of view, a lot of this amendment bill before the House today, as I said, is non-contentious. The irony of what I said in relation to a section of the amendment bill is that it is basically denying Aboriginal people their right to go to court and test their ability to obtain certain objects that have come to Australia. The argument rightly is that if you do not have something with certainty like that then you will not have these objects being brought to Australia for exhibition and show. I understand the policy consideration in relation to that. But the point I am making is that it would cause Aboriginal people some concern, in that this hardly comes under the banner of protecting our Aboriginal heritage if you are denying us the right to litigate.

It has been 10 years since the Evatt report was released. In effect, in this debate, I am saying that the government should not put their heads in the sand. They should come forward with a comprehensive bill—not just these amendments but at some time in the future—and act on their promises. They should act on the commitments they gave and the commitments Senator Hill gave when this legislation was being debated in the Senate. One of the reasons I do not think that will happen is that, quite frankly, I think Senator Hill was a little bit different to other ministers and other senior ministers in this government because he did have a level of sympathy. When you talk to Aboriginal people you hear that, in this area, he was quite sympathetic. I think the truth is that he got rolled within the Prime Minister's office or within policy offices. (*Time expired*)

Ms GEORGE (Throsby) (7.12 pm)—I will begin by saying that the **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Amendment Bill 2005** is very disappointing because it is very narrow in its scope and does not address the very important broader Indigenous heritage issues that this nation so desperately needs to come to terms with. The government had promised to better protect Indigenous heritage, but if the bill before

us today is the end result of that commitment then it really fails the test because it proposes only very limited—albeit uncontroversial—changes. It certainly does not uphold the commitments made by Senator Robert Hill, which my colleague has referred to, when back in 2003 Senator Hill told the Senate:

We recognise the shortcomings in the existing system. Reform of that is long overdue ... We are anxious to have a new and better piece of legislation put in place as quickly as possible.

We certainly concurred with the words of the Senate leader at that time, yet we see a very limited response to the claims that were made about the inadequacy of Indigenous heritage protection and the need to get new legislation into parliament as quickly as possible.

The legislation before us was referred to a Senate committee. It was asked to address three specific issues: firstly, whether the amendments were adequate to protect Indigenous heritage; secondly, whether the amendments addressed concerns of Indigenous Australians; and, thirdly, whether the amendments reflected changes recommended by the Evatt report. Again, my colleague the member for Banks has made extensive reference to the recommendations made by Justice Elizabeth Evatt in that very important inquiry. But what we have seen since 1996 is the government's failure to properly meet its obligations to protect and conserve Indigenous heritage. In fact, this government has drastically reduced its engagement in Indigenous heritage issues, passing the buck, as it so often does, to the state governments.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Act 1984 was only ever a temporary stopgap measure. It was described in Justice Evatt's report as an act of 'last resort', intended to fill the gaps in state and territory heritage protection. In fact, the act, with all its limitations, has been little used. With the advent of the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act, it appears that it is the intention of the Commonwealth to confine its statutory involvement in Indigenous heritage issues to the EPBC Act while ignoring the broader scope that could potentially be offered by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Act.

If properly administered and implemented, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Act has a far greater capacity to protect significant Indigenous heritage, as the EPBC Act confines the statutory role of the Commonwealth to matters of national and international significance. The EPBC Act, in my view, is totally ineffective in dealing with the protection of Indigenous heritage values at a local level. I will show this to be the case as I outline in more detail some of the difficulties that we have had in preserving a significant site of Indigenous heritage value in my electorate.

When the heritage amendments to the EPBC Act were debated in 2003, Senator Hill gave repeated assurances that the government was carrying out a consultation process with Indigenous communities on an amendment bill to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Act. He said that this would ensure that the Commonwealth continued to play an active role in the protection of Indigenous heritage sites that did not fall within the scope of the EPBC Act. It seems to me that it is the case that no such consultations of any substance ever took place. In relation to the National Heritage List—or what will remain of it following debate on the Environment and Heritage Legislation Amendment Bill (No. 1) 2006 that was introduced recently into this chamber—it appears that a place of significance to a particular Indigenous community will never be eligible for inclusion on the list unless it can establish that the place is important to the broader Australian community and very stringent criteria will apply. In my view, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Amendment Bill fails the first test that the Senate was asked to consider: do the amendments proposed in the bill protect Indigenous heritage in its broader sense? I think they fail to do that.

In terms of the second reference, which was to address the concerns of Indigenous Australians, the minority Senate report states:

We are concerned that the timing of the ... inquiry ... was such that we were unable to illicit [sic] substantive Indigenous community submissions or enable adequate community consultation to properly ascertain the level and substance of community concern regarding this Bill.

It does not bode very well for meeting the second test—does it address the concerns of Indigenous Australians?—when the time limits were so short and there was never adequate or extensive consultation with the people most affected and most interested in the outcome of this legislation.

Thirdly, the Senate was asked to consider whether the amendments reflect the changes recommended in the report of Justice Evatt. I again quote the minority Senate report and its conclusions:

... it is fairly clear that these amendments as a whole do not address the report's recommendations in a substantive fashion and that there is no evidence of any other efforts on behalf of government to address the reports major recommendations.

I guess that extensive report, dating back to 1996, is just gathering dust on the bookshelf. The people that were involved in the preparation of the most comprehensive recommendations going to the heart of Indigenous heritage protection would be extremely disappointed to see the lack of commitment by this government on many—if not all—of the proposals recommended by Justice Evatt. Within the scope of Evatt's recommendations were the following suggestions:

- The integration of cultural heritage assessment into the planning and development process at the earliest possible stage.
-
- That decisions on a site are an issue for Indigenous people to determine on the basis of an assessment of the intensity of belief and feeling of significance.
- Decisions should be made on the basis of information provided by relevant Indigenous communities or individuals and that any anthropological information be provided with their consent
- That a voluntary mediation procedure should be developed to encourage agreement making, within an adequate timeframe to allow proper consultation and negotiation with the site protected during the process.

Even if those proposals arising out of the Evatt report had been implemented—and there has been a long time for this government to make a commitment to the implementation of those recommendations—I believe a lot of very important historical and cultural sites of significance would have been preserved in perpetuity for the benefit of this nation. Had Justice Evatt’s recommendations been accepted, we could have taken some pride as a nation in our efforts to collectively preserve our unique and special heritage. Instead we inflict continuing trauma on many Indigenous communities by our lack of respect for and protection of our very valuable heritage.

I recently had an email from a woman a long way away—from Esperance—who I had not met, but she put this argument to me very eloquently. She was writing specifically about the possible destruction of ancient rock art at the Burrup Peninsula:

I remember being appalled when I heard of the Taliban’s destruction of the great statues to Buddha in Afghanistan. Although I had never heard of the statues before and probably would never have travelled to Afghanistan to see them had they not been destroyed, I felt their loss as one of humanity’s great treasures: something that belongs to the heritage of all of us as human beings, like the Pyramids of Giza, Stonehenge, Angkor Wat, Great Zimbabwe, the Lascaux and Altamira cave paintings.

I felt a similar shock at the loss of human heritage when it appeared that looters had stolen the archaeological treasures of the ancient Sumerians, Babylonians and Assyrians during the 2003 invasion of Iraq, and was immensely relieved to discover that the museum staff had simply taken the treasures home to protect them from destruction and looting. The ancient heritage of Iraq is the heritage of all civilisations. We in Australia have been bequeathed an important site of ancient human art on the Burrup Peninsula far far older than anything from ancient Sumer, Greece or Egypt.

She concludes:

It is our duty as custodians of this part of the world to ensure that such a treasure is preserved for all humanity, for it is the heritage of all humanity.

I thought she expressed that particularly well and poignantly.

I thought I would use the time I have in discussion of the limitations of this bill to outline a recent issue that has arisen in my local community and one which has finally ended in a successful outcome. But I want, for the record, to include details of some of the correspondence I have had with different ministers about this piece of land, just to show the limitations and inadequacies of the current approach to the protection of Indigenous heritage that is local and site specific.

That decision relates to a piece of land that was up for sale—Defence land which adjoins Hill 60 in Port Kembla, in my electorate of Throsby. The decision to put that land up for sale has been reversed but it is important, as I said earlier, to record in *Hansard* the arguments that were advanced by this government initially for the sale of the land. You should understand, Madam Deputy Speaker, that Hill 60 has a particular significance for the Illawarra’s Indigenous community. They all united in their condemnation of the proposed sale of the parcel of land adjoining Hill 60, which I should note had already been granted heritage listing by the New South Wales government.

It seems to me—and I think I will convince you in what I have to say—that the government’s final position outlined to me in a letter of 2 November is totally at odds with the earlier justification for disposal of the land. It is clear to me that the community campaign forced this government into making a political decision rather the one that should have been based on the intrinsic merit of the Indigenous heritage properties of the land in question. The original decision to dispose of the land in question shows the obvious limitations and weakness in the protection of Indigenous heritage.

At the ‘Save Our Hill’ rally on Sunday, 6 August this year, Uncle Reuben Brown, one of our esteemed local elders, referred to the community’s longstanding connection with this land when he said:

On this land here is where my wife’s mother and my great grandmother’s little sister lived in a tin shed. This is where they lived until about 1942 when the army moved them out, but that doesn’t change the fact that over there is where our ancestors have been buried. They want to sell the land from under us. We’ve got to do something to make sure that it doesn’t happen.

As their local federal member and as a person with a longstanding interest in and involvement with Indigenous communities, I agreed wholeheartedly with the justice of their case and pursued their claims with several government ministers and, I have to acknowledge, with the support of the local Liberal senator based in Wollongong. I urged the Minister for the Environment and Heritage to intervene in terms of his authority—or what I thought his authority was—under federal legislation. I also called on the Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, in a genuine act of practical reconciliation, to have the Defence land incorporated into the current Hill 60 heri-

tage listing by the New South Wales government. Let me, for the record, indicate the responses I received. The first one I had was from Senator Sandy Macdonald, in his capacity as Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Defence. First of all, he apologised for the fact that he had not notified me, as the local member, that it was their intention to sell surplus Defence property on the open market. He said:

... due to an administrative oversight, this property was included with the sale of another in an adjoining electorate and the letter was inadvertently sent to the wrong Federal Member.

That caused me some consternation from the beginning. But what was of particularly great concern to me was this claim. He said:

I note your request that I intervene and stop the sale of the land and undertake further discussions with community representatives. I also note your view that the Defence site should remain in public ownership and be used as a focal point in commemoration of the region's Indigenous history. The defence site is adjacent to the much larger Hill 60 site, which is owned by Council and includes a lookout and picnic area.

I emphasise the next part of his letter:

I am advised the due diligence studies conducted on the Defence site identified no significant heritage, environmental or Indigenous values. Therefore, recognition of Indigenous values would seem to rest more appropriately at the Hill 60 site.

I was amazed that the government had failed to properly understand the significance of this site not just to our Indigenous peoples but to our local community. The due diligence studies referred to were never made publicly available.

On 7 September the environment minister also responded to me in much the same way. I cannot quote it all but let me just say that, in one paragraph of his letter, he says:

In order to determine what values are present at the site, the Department of Defence engaged a consultant to undertake heritage and environmental assessments of the land. The assessments found that, despite the State heritage listing, the area adjacent to Hill 60 contained no significant heritage or environmental values, although some low-level Indigenous values of only limited significance were reported.

So there you are. I took the matter up with two ministers who I thought would have authority to do something about this matter. But, lo and behold, finally we got the decision that should have been the response in the first place. In a letter of 2 November from Sandy Macdonald, parliamentary secretary, suddenly environmental and heritage values are found to exist. The letter said:

I write further to my letter dated 9 August 2006 regarding surplus Defence land ... As you are aware, no compliant tenders were received when the property was placed on the open market ...

Throughout the marketing campaign it became apparent that the local community perceives the Defence site as having similar environmental and heritage values to that of the adjacent Hill 60 Park and lookout area.

He goes on to outline a very sensible proposal, which has been accepted by the community, that the site be offered to the Wollongong City Council under concessional priority sale arrangements.

I have to ask: what would have happened had our local community not risen in revolt against this proposal to sell the surplus defence land? If there had not been the community concern, would that land now be in the hands of developers? Is this the way that this government treats intrinsic Indigenous heritage values? Is this the way they are to be assessed and determined—that is, the political pressure that you wield determines whether or not the government finally accepts the merit of Indigenous heritage values? The whole process is very ad hoc, and the final decision, although welcomed by the community, is, in my view, a political one that was made in order to pacify community opposition rather than a decision that should have been made on the merits of the case for the retention of the land in public ownership from the start of this campaign in our local community.

So that, just as a little cameo, shows the total inadequacy of the processes that pertain to the preservation of important Indigenous heritage in our country. We cannot allow the process to be determined purely on the basis of political response and counterresponse. If the community had not rallied so wonderfully behind the Indigenous community that land might well have ended up in developer hands and been sold, and with it another part of our Indigenous heritage and history would have been lost forever.

It is for those reasons I support the amendment moved by my colleague, the member for Grayndler, which registers our concern at this government's failure to address many shortcomings in Indigenous heritage protection, as my local case study highlights. We note that it is now 10 years since the Evatt inquiry report and that the government has failed to act on many of its significant recommendations. We believe it is time for a comprehensive review of Indigenous heritage protection along the lines promised by Senator Robert Hill on behalf of this government back in August 2003.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. BK Bishop)—I would remind members that I have allowed a fairly free-ranging debate, taking full advantage of the extent of the amendment moved as well, but there is a need to connect it to the bill.

Mr MARTIN FERGUSON (Batman) (7.32 pm)—In rising this evening to address the [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Amendment Bill 2005](#) I note, as I have said on many occasions over the last 12 months, that this debate has been a long

time coming. It draws further attention to the fact that now more than ever we have a government that is tardy when it comes to legislation, lacks a commitment to the legislative process and has no respect for the parliament or the people of Australia, whom we represent. It is a very strong statement about the arrogance of this government. I say that because it is now more than three years since then Senator Hill, who was also a minister, gave undertakings that the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Amendment Bill would be 'brought into the Senate as quickly as possible'.

Senator Hill has long departed the Senate and I must say that, if they were in a hurry with this bill, I would hate to see them if they were not in a hurry. It is three years since the minister gave that undertaking. By any reasonable person's definition three years is hardly as quickly as possible, especially when you think about the fact that these amendments do not make any great drafting demands with respect to what is before the chair this evening. They are simply about giving greater certainty to international cultural loan arrangements, and so they should be. They bring administration of heritage protection in Victoria in line with other states, which is an appropriate decision. They also provide consistency and clarity with respect to the Legislative Instruments Act 2003.

This bill does absolutely nothing to more properly protect the Indigenous heritage of our country. That is why there is significant criticism by the opposition of the bill before the chair this evening. I note that the bill does nothing to address the broad weaknesses in Indigenous heritage protection under the Howard government. The bill certainly falls short of addressing the issues canvassed by the 1996 Evatt inquiry into the Commonwealth Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Act 1984.

Many of my colleagues on the opposition side of the House have already addressed the range of issues in their contributions to this debate. Those that particularly interest and concern me relate to the establishment of independent Indigenous cultural heritage bodies run by Indigenous people as representatives of their communities. I am a longstanding and great believer in promoting self-determination for Indigenous communities. On many occasions in this House I have talked about the need for economic empowerment to replace the cycle of welfare dependency and despair that permeates many of our remote Aboriginal communities. I have talked about the need for real investment by both the government and the private sector in Indigenous communities so as to ensure we do something substantial about the creation of real jobs and real education and training opportunities.

I remind the House yet again this evening that one in two Australians living in Northern Australia will be of

Indigenous descent by 2020. These people are the future workforce for Northern Australia. Just think about it: the pastoral industry, agriculture, forest plantation, mining and tourism, just to refer to a few key employment opportunities for our Indigenous communities between now and 2020.

I am therefore pleased to report to the House that I now see many companies recognising this and appropriately embracing the potential of Australia's Indigenous citizens. Just as economic self-determination is important for Indigenous communities, so too is self-determination when it comes to the protection of Indigenous heritage. I intend to address a few of these issues this evening because it is about challenging some people who like to make speeches about these issues but, when it comes down to giving the Indigenous communities some real power, they like to run away from their responsibilities. It is all about all talk and no action.

Therefore, I remind the House that I have said on a number of occasions that for far too long special interest groups—antinuclear campaigners, antimining campaigners, anteforestry campaigners—have used Indigenous communities to peddle their own short-term political gains based on ideology. That poses a very serious question which is central to this debate: what have Indigenous communities got in return? Certainly not jobs, certainly not better education for Indigenous kids, certainly not better health, certainly not better training and certainly not better resources for cultural knowledge systems or cultural heritage protection. The simple fact is that Indigenous empowerment is not in the interest of some of these so-called special interest groups; they are about paternalism. Predictably, when I raised this issue in September this year in another debate in the House, Friends of the Earth wrote to the *Australian Financial Review* and have since written many letters to many newspapers attacking my position. I say 'predictably' because the fact is that Indigenous communities are awake to the Friends of the Earth and their green colleagues. This is a threat to their political base. It is about time we nailed this debate for what it is. It is not about Indigenous empowerment and self-determination; it is about the political base and the political future of some environmental NGOs and the Greens.

In that context, I simply refer to the debate about this bill in the Senate. The House needs to look no further than the Greens amendment to this bill, which interestingly proposes an independent review of the repeal of part 2A of the Aboriginal Heritage Act. The Greens in that debate have nominated one member of a four-member committee to represent the Indigenous community—one member! The other three are so-called experts in various aspects of Indigenous heritage. They know better than the Indigenous commu-

nity! The fact is that the Greens want left-wing ideologues in control, not Indigenous people, clearly flying in the face of the Evatt recommendations for Indigenous control of their own heritage.

So on the one hand you have the coalition, which does not care about Indigenous heritage at all. This is evident, I believe, from the tardiness in introducing these bills and its failure to admit any serious shortcomings in Indigenous heritage protection today. We also have to be concerned about the other extreme of this debate. There is the government on one hand, but let us talk about the other extreme. You have the Greens and some environmental NGOs who only care about Indigenous heritage if they can use it to their own short-term political gain to stop mining or forestry or to shut down industry and take away people's jobs and Indigenous opportunities of the future.

The green movement never let the facts stand in the way of a good story that they like to peddle from time to time. I go to the letter to from the Friends of the Earth to the *Financial Review*, which talks about:

... the indefensible and racist situation where the Roxby Downs uranium mine in South Australia is exempt from the Aboriginal Heritage Protection Act.

Let us deal with a few facts. That statement is simply not true. As I said, never let the truth or honesty come between the Greens and their friends, the environmental NGOs, and a good story. The truth is that Roxby Downs, or Olympic Dam, is subject to indenture legislation put in place in 1982 to clarify the rights, responsibilities and obligations of both the operators and the government. That is about sovereign risk and security of investment, which is about making sure that Australia remains a place that is attractive for investment because of security and safety for investors. Except as specifically provided for in this indenture, and this is the key to it—it is a very transparent indenture—the operations are subject to all the requirements of all the laws of South Australia. At the time of the finalisation of the Roxby Downs (Indenture Ratification) Act, the Aboriginal Heritage Act 1979 had recently been enacted by the parliament, but a different act was already in the process of formulation. This act did not come into force for another six years. It became the Aboriginal Heritage Act 1988. It was therefore logical for the government and the operators to agree that, in order to provide the project with a reasonable level of regulatory certainty so as to ensure the investments, the 1979 act would apply to the original project area defined in the indenture as the Stuart Shelf area.

Let us go on and deal with a few other facts. The fact is that Olympic Dam is subject to not one but two state Aboriginal heritage acts. One covers the mine lease and the wider Stuart Shelf area. The other covers areas beyond that on which there is infrastructure, such as powerlines and water pipelines. The fact that Olym-

pic Dam is covered under the two acts makes no practical difference to how Aboriginal heritage is managed but it is protected in all areas of operation and, more importantly, BHP, which now owns Olympic Dam, is absolutely committed to this process.

Before the last expansion of Olympic Dam in the mid-1990s, the mine operator, then Western Mining, signed an agreement with native title claimants to deal with both native title and heritage issues. As a result, Aboriginal heritage has been managed in a manner supported by the claimants. It might not have the support of Friends of the Earth and its fellow travellers, but it has enjoyed the support of the Indigenous communities.

I go to the current proposed expansion process. To facilitate the current proposed expansion, I am sure that BHP will negotiate in good faith towards a new agreement with the claimants groups, and so they ought to, because that is what they are seeking to do as a company Australia wide. I simply say that in my opinion BHP Billiton has a good track record in this area. One of the recent projects it was involved in which went to heritage work was work undertaken near Onslow, Western Australia, for the Pilbara liquefied natural gas project—something very important to Australia, given its export potential.

The work undertaken provided local Indigenous people with archaeological field skills and it also recorded valuable information for the Western Australian heritage database. It also created a new opportunity for the Indigenous community, which they grabbed with both hands. Only a few of the Indigenous people had been involved in something like this before. I suppose we are not surprised. So this opportunity was a worthwhile learning exchange between them and archaeologists, as well as an opportunity to establish a strong relationship between the LNG project team and the local Indigenous community.

So what is the result? Previously, the Aboriginal community had not been exposed to these opportunities, but as a result of this some of the younger Aboriginal people got new opportunities in life. It was also an opportunity for the elders through this process to teach the younger generation about their history. A film crew accompanied a team for part of this time so that the Pilbara experience can be used for future induction and cultural awareness training of construction crews—a win-win for everyone.

While we are talking about the Pilbara, I note the comments by my colleague the member for Kingsford Smith about Woodside's proposed Pluto project on the Burrup Peninsula. Like BHP, which is in fact one of the North West Shelf venture partners, Woodside has a longstanding record of heritage protection on the Burrup Peninsula, where it has operated LNG and domestic gas facilities for some 22 years on behalf of the

North West Shelf venture. The Pluto project will be Woodside's first attempt at going it alone in the LNG business—a mammoth undertaking for a home-grown Australian company distributing profits to predominantly Australian owners. This project, if it proceeds, will provide employment for thousands of people and boost the Australian economy by some \$18 billion. It will bring in \$8 billion in taxes for schools, hospitals, roads, public services and infrastructure. But it is also a very important project in itself.

Interestingly, this is another project that, broadly speaking, has the support of Indigenous communities but not the support of their white cousins in Sydney, Perth and Melbourne. Certainly, the traditional owners have signed an agreement with Western Australia that supports the industrial zoning of the Pluto sites. It is important to remember that 27,000 hectares of the Burrup rock art precinct is already set aside for conservation. The Pluto development will occupy just a tiny fraction—one per cent—of this area. There are about one million engravings and thousands of cultural heritage sites in the whole precinct, yet only 115 engravings fall within the Pluto development area.

Let us deal with a few facts yet again. It is the intention of Woodside to avoid or relocate all of them. It is my view that the competition between industry and cultural heritage should not be addressed through an argument over whether to list or not to list. The real issue is to recognise that we can have multiple land use values of listed places that should be properly managed through the use of regulation, statutory management plans and conditions on developments. There is no doubt in my mind that these places with really special environmental and heritage values—and in my view the Burrup Peninsula is one of these—should be properly listed and recognised for those values. Any fair-minded person would support such a proposition. But there is also no doubt in my mind that, if those places have other very important values—for example, nationally significant economic and strategic values; and, again, that is my view when it comes to the Burrup Peninsula—then there is the need to find a way to protect those values as well.

We as a community can have multiple land use values and we can manage them properly so that heritage is protected but sustainable economic growth that underpins our national wealth can still occur. It is time to stop the scaremongering and tell the truth and it is time for industry and environmental stakeholders to move closer to the middle, to accept listing but also development, and to concentrate on management practice that best protects heritage values and allows sustainable development to occur in the interests of the nation's continuing wealth.

Indigenous communities need heritage protection, but they also need wealth creation and the opportuni-

ties that flow from such wealth creation so as to overcome the huge social problems that confront them as communities—something that we like to talk about in the inner city suburbs of Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane and every other capital city of Australia but something most of those people who make the speeches do very little to actually progress.

At a time when Australia faces a severe skill shortage and desperately needs more people participating in the workforce, it is an indictment of this government that Indigenous employment lags so far behind mainstream levels of participation. Indigenous employment, education and training, business and community development opportunities should be key considerations in all mining approval and management plans. It is also a responsibility of industry itself and of all levels of government in Australia to progress this objective.

Today some estimates put the cost to government of Indigenous unemployment at \$1 billion per annum. The cost to the Australian economy in lost productive output associated with Indigenous unemployment is estimated at another \$3 billion and related social welfare expenditure and forgone tax revenue is a further \$3 billion. It is therefore smart from a government point of view to work out this partnership with the private sector, because it involves serious revenue issues confronting the current government.

As I have said in this House before, not only is it shameful in the 21st century that a modern developed and wealthy society tolerates the level of Indigenous unemployment and social disadvantage that this country tolerates, but also it is costing Australia \$7 billion a year. What a challenge—to actually do something on the ground but also do something for revenue so that we have more money to spend on other priorities.

Notwithstanding the unforgivable human cost, imagine the financial cost to Australia of Indigenous unemployment by 2020 if we fail to properly address the incredible social disadvantage faced by these people. Aboriginal heritage protection is a vital part of the framework for rebuilding self-reliant and proud Indigenous communities, but it must go hand in hand with greater action to provide education, training and jobs for the future. Sadly, this bill does very little for the advancement of Indigenous people or the protection of their heritage. In that context I simply say that not only is the government to be chastised but so are some of the environmental NGOs and the Greens for their lack of understanding of the real issues confronting the Australian community with respect to these challenges. I commend the second reading amendment to the House.

Mr ANDREN (Calare) (7.52 am)—I recognise the political imperatives of the former speaker, the member for Batman, but I strongly disagree with his assessment of the multiple land-use options—for Burrup Peninsula

in particular. It is an invidious thing to have to pass heritage protection legislation that ensures that rare and important artefacts originally expropriated from Indigenous Australians be returned to those overseas galleries and museums that claim ownership of them. The [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Amendment Bill 2005](#) says more about the value we give to museums and exhibitions than it does about our regard for in situ sites of Indigenous significance across this country.

As is the case the world over, so many objects from ancient worlds and cultures have been swindled and stolen from peoples who did not have the power to stop that swindling and stealing. We now have sites that are stolen with little or no regard for Indigenous heritage. Over time, these precious items that we are talking about in this specific legislation—these records of cultures—have become the legal property of overseas institutions, often by dint of those institutions belonging to the countries from which the plunderers and collectors came or by those institutions having more money than the descendants of the original owners could ever dream of having. The famous nonreturn of the Elgin Marbles is but one case in point.

However, the sad reality is that, unless those lending institutions have a legal guarantee that such lent objects will be returned, those countries of origin, including Australia, will lose any opportunity to see those items again. This was clearly demonstrated two years ago when descendants of the Dja Dja Wurrung people in Victoria sought the preservation and compulsory acquisition of bark etchings and a ceremonial carving made by their forebears. These rare and important objects were lent by British institutions to Museum Victoria. While the resulting court case dissolved the section 10 emergency declarations and the items were subsequently returned to Britain, this case was used overseas as an example of why art galleries and museums throughout the world should consider the risks involved in lending art overseas, notwithstanding the lack of moral claim to that art. In fact, the cultural and historical significance of these artefacts to the traditional owners is far beyond the Western value attached to their rarity and history, and this should be recognised and acted upon.

However, the sad consequence is that an estimated 40,000 other Indigenous objects and human remains held in overseas institutions may never be seen in Australia again, should Australia refuse to guarantee the return of such lent objects. Consequently, many collectors, museums and art galleries would be reluctant to lend objects and artefacts to other countries of origin also.

This bill then provides for a certificate under section 12 of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Act allowing a person to import Australian protected

objects for temporary purposes and, subsequently, to export those objects, even where an emergency declaration seeking to protect or preserve areas or objects is issued. It would seem in this scenario that we have no choice but to entrust the protection of these precious objects to those overseas institutions and to continue to strongly support efforts to repatriate rare and sacred items. I also sincerely hope that the Victorian heritage legislation that will replace the protections of part IIA of the current act—the section repealed in this bill—will offer effective and responsive protection of places and objects of an Indigenous cultural significance in that state. Certainly, the enactment of its own Indigenous heritage protection laws in Victoria is consistent with other states' enactment of protection laws.

While the issue of nationally consistent and effective protection for Australian heritage—both Indigenous and, more recently, non-Indigenous heritage—is a moot point, we do have a very real ability to ensure the protection of places and objects that are in Australia, some of which are ancient indeed. It all boils down to political will. Indeed, our Prime Minister was determined to save the Kokoda Trail—some 60 years old—in Papua New Guinea from the ravages of gold mining that is said to be worth over \$1 billion to the PNG economy. This is certainly a show of commitment to our very recent history.

But consider this: 60,000 years ago, people had already migrated thousands of kilometres from the north of what was then greater Australia and were living in New South Wales, leaving their footprints in the mud of Willandra Lakes over tens of thousands of years. Rightly, Willandra Lakes is a declared world heritage area and it cannot be lifted up and exported for the edification of museum visitors around the world. By comparison, 60,000 years ago, man had not even reached northern America and in Europe they were just starting to live alongside Neanderthals. The world was in the middle of an unstable series of ice ages that had started a thaw and rising sea levels, which took another 40,000-odd years to stabilise. It was 30,000 years ago that the last Neanderthals died out. It was 10,000 to 15,000 years ago that the slow melt of the Ice Age saw the extinction of sabre tooth cats and mammoths, the rise of settled communities with agriculture and recorded story telling and myth. It was only in the last several thousand years that those great ancient civilisations appeared. In this context, those objects and places that record those very first peoples in Australia are very ancient and very precious indeed.

Most people in this parliament would agree with the imperative to protect the pyramids and ancient objects of Egypt and with the value of preserving the remains of antiquity thousands of years old. Most people would have recoiled in horror at the Taliban's destruction of the centuries-old Buddhas of Afghanistan. Some may

be aware that the trade in antiquities, both legal and often illegal, is estimated to be worth many billions every year. Yet, at Burrup Peninsula in the Dampier Archipelago in Western Australia, part of the world's largest and most important concentration of ancient rock carvings face deliberate destruction or removal because of the refusal to relocate further development of an ill-conceived industrial complex to a nearby site. This is a place where the very first people most probably reached Australia and where they have inscribed in the rocks hundreds of thousands of images that record the extraordinary history of this amazing continent and the continuity of human use over at least 20,000 to 30,000 years. I say at least 20,000 years; it is likely far more, because 60,000 years ago people were already leaving their traces in New South Wales thousands of kilometres away.

So, at the Dampier Archipelago, strewn amongst the rock outcrops, rock piles and boulder slopes of the whole landscape are ancient campsites, quarries, shell middens, the world's largest collection of standing stones, artefacts and a bewildering array of rock art that has been estimated to contain up to a million images—areas so crowded with them that images merely the age of the pyramids or the great Etruscan or Maya civilisations have been superimposed over more ancient ones, some of them estimated to be the oldest images in Australia. This is a place of extraordinary testimony to long extinct fauna, to the changing landscape as the ice age thawed and oceans slowly rose and to the continuous use by people over tens of thousands of years.

You would think this place is worthy of absolutely irrefutable preservation. But here we had in this parliament recently changes to the EPBC Act that can make the protection of that in the short term highly dubious because of the delays built into that process and the fact that it relies on one minister, after all these tens of thousands of years, to make a decision on this process. And that is the cynicism with which the EPBC Act was amended at the very time that Woodside were in this parliament lobbying. I listened to them with great interest when they spoke about their commitment. I listened to the former speaker, the member for Batman, who spoke about the many jobs, the need for the export earnings and the fact that we have to look at ways of employing Indigenous communities—all of that. But we are, after all, talking about an item of absolutely irreplaceable World Heritage value. And yet we have not had a state government, for almost 40 years now, or a federal government prepared to begin the process of listening on a proper state and national level to preserve those inestimable values that are on that peninsula.

A few days ago I learnt that there has been an offer made by the Northwest Shelf Venture partners. BHP

Billiton, to their credit, have moved their operations further to the south to avoid the damage that would inevitably be caused to this ancient site. An offer has been made to move the Pluto operations to a site to the north of their presently planned area. But does the Western Australian government seem impressed? I think not. The hysterical utterings that are coming out of their minister and the government in general show no will at all to offer the sort of protection that is desperately needed to protect this World Heritage site. The former speaker has left the chamber, but this is not about metropolitan Australians promoting a cafe latte cause, as the member for Batman might suggest; it is about serious neglect over many years that is only now being addressed through the actions of concerned people.

In the 2000 *Four Corners* program Woodside confirmed that when it developed its massive North West Shelf gas plant those 'sites and engravings' that could not be removed were 'recorded and then destroyed', with 'a company spokesperson saying some carvings were probably used as base for the plant'. The Department of Environment and Heritage's own Australian heritage database claims 'survey, salvage and relocation' of the images constituted adoption of 'world's best practice'. Well, let others be the judge of that.

By comparison, think about the Palaeolithic Lascaux Cave paintings in France, where French governments have invested millions to protect the site, building replicas of two cave halls to ensure carbon dioxide from the collective breath of the visitors does not further degrade these precious paintings. Compare that with the Burrup and the Dampier Peninsula, where the emissions of industry are causing the acidic rain that is eating away at the surface of these very sites. We cannot lift up these sites and move them to a gallery on the other side of the world where they may be protected and looked after and not claimed back, perhaps, as the intent of this bill suggests.

We cannot do that. We have in situ perhaps the greatest gallery on the face of this planet, and here we have a debate over the worth of that vis-a-vis the undoubted worth of the exports, jobs and everything else that come from the North West Shelf. But, hey, we have options, we have alternatives, we have another way. What we do not have is the will of short-term governments that do not think beyond the election cycle of the next three years. We think only of the process that will minimise the disturbance to the industrial complex; not maximise the protection of this world important site.

It is absolutely imperative that the federal minister looks at the nomination of this internationally recognised place. He has had it since 2004. For him to wait months before listing it allows industry to buy from the government time that allows further destruction of this

site. This is an example of the sort of Indigenous heritage site that I believe is an exemplar of the extent to which we have devalued Indigenous heritage in this country.

This federal act will still apply as a last resort when significant places or objects cannot be adequately protected by state or territory laws, but the sad Lake Condah and Framlingham Forest affair in Victoria, where that state's upper house in the 1980s shamefully supported non-Indigenous landholder interests over Indigenous people's legitimate heritage claims, could well be repeated elsewhere in Australia. Burrup is at the absolute extreme of that argument.

There is a huge gap in the recording and protection of Indigenous sites across Australia, with local government particularly remiss in its care and consideration of significant sites, which are often regarded as substantially less significant than development priorities. While we have opportunities in the areas of Australia with traditional occupation—even those fractured by, as in the Burrup case, the noncontinuity of people's occupation of that area—to intervene before it is too late, in the southern and south-eastern portion of the continent Aboriginal people's identity and their connection to that land has been, as was quoted in the Yorta Yorta case, washed away by the tide of colonialisation.

Sites have been discovered recently in my own electorate—modern Indigenous sites of camps made during the Depression years. The member for Batman mentioned the employment disadvantage of Indigenous people. The 50 per cent unemployment rates were tenfold then—if you can have 500 per cent unemployment. I am talking about the period when Indigenous peoples were living in camps built around the central west. It seems that has absolutely no significance to the non-Indigenous peoples. It has huge significance to more recent families—to the mobs that have resettled and to other language groups that have moved into the more settled areas—and yet we have a total disregard. At one site in recent days—wait for it—the gravelling of walkways through the former campsite was done with gravel extracted from a quarry that itself contained artefacts that were not recognised and not known about until they were discovered by the land council in the area. This is the sort of disregard, almost contempt by negligence, that I am talking about—probably not towards the sort of artefacts that we are talking about in this bill, but I am talking about a state of mind, an attitude, and that can be traced right through to the Burrup example. I doubt that this federal legislation, despite its claims that it will apply as a last resort, will afford any protection to those areas of Indigenous heritage regarded as less significant than development priorities in the more settled areas of south-east Australia.

I note the second reading amendment, and I particularly support paragraphs (4) and (5), which calls on the government to support the inclusion of a sunset exemption provision in this bill, because the bill as it stands is inadequate. It does not address those areas that were drawn to the attention of the government of the day in the 1996 Evatt inquiry.

Mr BRENDAN O'CONNOR (Gorton) (8.11 pm)—I rise to support the **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Amendment Bill 2005** and the second reading amendment moved by the member for Grayndler. I say at the outset that there are some significant problems with this bill that the amendment seeks to rectify. As the member for Fraser on 10 October in this debate said:

It is a piece of legislation with a gestation period that has been sufficiently long to have produced several elephants, but it does not produce even a mouse.

I think that metaphorically sums up the problem with the bill. It is not comprehensive, it does not fulfil the undertakings given by then Senator Robert Hill to the opposition in 2003 and it fails therefore to properly protect in a comprehensive manner the Indigenous heritage of this nation.

This bill to amend the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Act emerges out of a tangled mess of inaction and half-hearted attempts to deal with long recognised problems associated with heritage protection in this country. Unfortunately, rather than definitively cleaning up this mess, it goes halfway and leaves the rest of the work undone.

One of the principal purposes of this legislation is to reform the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Act to provide greater certainty to cultural institutions when arranging loans by ensuring that declarations made under the act cannot prevent the return of objects transported temporarily to Australia with a certificate of exemption. This legislation enables a person who wants to import a protected article for an exhibition, for example, to apply to the Minister for the Environment and Heritage for a certificate authorising the object's exportation. The provisions allow museums and other cultural institutions in Australia to obtain objects under contractual and other loan arrangements for temporary exhibition in Australia. Such arrangements are difficult to negotiate unless overseas lending institutions have the protection of a certificate authorising the return of the objects.

This difficult and sensitive issue arose recently in Victoria after the staging of an exhibition of 19th century bark paintings by Museum Victoria. The works were extraordinarily rare and belonged to the British Museum and to the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. The items on loan from these institutions became the subject of temporary declarations under the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Act. Indige-

nous groups claimed traditional ownership of the items, whose return was prevented by the operation of the declarations. Museum Victoria had contractual obligations to return the items to the institutions concerned as soon as the exhibition had finished but was unable to do so. Legal proceedings were then instituted in the Federal Court.

The broader cultural implications of this impasse were immense. Ms Dawn Casey, formerly National Museum of Australia director, said in an advice to the Victorian government:

In my opinion, the impact of such a decision would include no further loans to any Australian museums.

She warned that for the sake of three disputed artefacts, 40,000 other Indigenous objects and human remains held in overseas institutions 'would most probably never be seen in Australia again ... Museums in Europe ... would cease to lend other indigenous people's cultural material to their countries of origin'. The Institute of Arts and Law in London uses this particular example as a case study of the dangers of lending art overseas.

This is obviously a very sensitive area of legislation, dealing as it does with the profound grief many Aboriginal people feel over the injustices of their past treatment by government and official authorities that saw them treated in many ways as simply exotic fauna to be studied, categorised and placed in an anthropological context, an approach which took no account whatsoever of cultural standards, taboos or cherished beliefs. Many Aboriginal people feel these are wrongs which need to be put right by returning cultural artefacts, or in some cases actual human remains, to their place of rest.

We as a nation must be alive to these sensitivities. However, I hope that custodians of culture are not overly restrictive. Archaeology has its place in teaching the rest of the world of the wonder of Aboriginal culture. Science has much to tell Aboriginal people themselves of their own history. Witness the sense of pride and self-worth in the faces of many Indigenous people when they convey that they are members of the longest continuous culture on earth, a realisation the scientific community came to through the properly conducted study of human remains from a past so deep that it challenges the human imagination. We saw a very recent example of the power of Aboriginal culture on the international stage when a museum located beside the Eiffel Tower was opened with many very large-scale commissions by Indigenous Australian artists embedded in its walls, ceilings and glass frontages.

Despite former promises by the government to comprehensively improve Indigenous heritage legislation, unfortunately this bill does not address broader Indigenous heritage issues such as those canvassed by the 1996 Evatt inquiry into the Commonwealth Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Act

1984. At least the former minister Robert Hill was aware of the pressing need to deal with the problems highlighted by the Evatt report. As I said earlier in my contribution, he gave undertakings to see that Aboriginal heritage protection was improved along the lines identified in the report. However, as a number of speakers in this debate have indicated, including the member for Fraser, whilst those undertakings were provided to the opposition in good faith by the then Senator Hill, they were not ultimately forthcoming.

This bill does not come close to recognising the need to do that work which remains undone. Amongst other things, this bill fails to respect customary restrictions on information, including gender restricted information; guarantee access rights to sites of recognised significance for those allowed to do so under customary law; establish independent Indigenous cultural heritage bodies; and legislate for protection of all aspects of Indigenous heritage, including intellectual property.

The National Heritage List has failed to live up to the promises of the government. Not a single place has been listed for its natural heritage values. Only one site on UNESCO's list of sixteen World Heritage sites in Australia is on our own National Heritage List. Giving some indication of the government's seriousness on the issue, not even the Great Barrier Reef is on the National Heritage List. All I can say is that the government had better hurry because, if the scientists' warnings on how well the reef is coping with climate change are even half right, it does not have too much longer to get serious about listing this extraordinary and wondrous place.

Other sites have an urgent call on the government's attention and will be a test of the minister's commitment to the value of cultural and heritage protection—like the controversial Burrup Peninsula, in Western Australia, which experts claim has the biggest concentration of ancient rock art in the world, some of which is 30,000 years old, or seven times older than Stonehenge. A preliminary Australian Heritage Council report sent to Senator Ian Campbell in May last year said the entire peninsula qualified for National Heritage and World Heritage listing, even under the government's extremely exacting standards. The department's own report said the peninsula 'contains one of the densest concentrations of rock engravings in Australia, with some sites containing thousands or tens of thousands of images'. Later in the same report it stated:

Estimates of the number of rock motifs range from 300,000 to well over one million images. They are thought to be at least 10,000 years old and the place constitutes the greatest cultural site in Australia.

Australia's Indigenous communities hold their breath for the minister's decision in this case.

We support this bill, such as it is—and, indeed, the amendment moved by the member for Grayndler—but call on the government to remember its 2003 commitment to introduce a ‘new and better piece of legislation’. Unfortunately, this is not it. There is still more work to be done.

Dr LAWRENCE (Fremantle) (8.21 pm)—Despite some early promises and following the recommendations of the Evatt review, commissioned by the previous Labor government to better protect Indigenous heritage, sadly the government has delivered almost nothing. The ‘new and better legislation’ that it promised has not been delivered, certainly not in this **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Amendment Bill 2005**, nor have Indigenous people been properly engaged and consulted in the process. The Evatt report appears pretty much to have been shelved. It is fair to say that in this country Indigenous heritage of national significance is still not well protected. I want to speak to night, as did the member for Calare—and I assure you we did not talk about this before we made our speeches—about one of the most spectacular failures to value and protect Indigenous heritage and, indeed, a globally significant heritage site.

Most Australians know the Dampier Peninsula, if they know it at all, through stories of the ‘miracle’ resources boom. They may have seen the television footage, the photographs and the images of the gas tankers powering through the apparently pristine channels of the Dampier Archipelago, delivering gas to an energy hungry world from the processing plants of the remote North-West coast of my state, Western Australia, to China, Japan and Korea, but they almost certainly know little or nothing about Woodside and the North-West Shelf operations beyond those images. Most of them probably do not appreciate—and I had the honour of giving a speech about this matter at the recent ICOMOS conference in Fremantle—that in the background of those images of the tankers is the most significant heritage site in Australia and, sadly, the only one on the World Monuments Fund list of the 100 most endangered places.

ICOMOS, for those who do not know, is the International Council on Monuments and Sites. It has an Australian branch, and it takes responsibility through its actions for the protection of heritage. I will return in a moment to the resolution carried at its conference. In giving a speech to the ICOMOS conference, I was able to draw attention to the Burrup or, to give it its Indigenous name, Murujuga, and to indicate that it has the densest concentration of rock art in the world, estimated at perhaps as many as a million petroglyphs, which some have described as ‘the world’s largest gallery of engraved prehistoric art’. Yet most members of parliament know nothing of this.

Rock carvings are scattered through the barren rocky ridges and steep-sided valleys of the peninsula and the surrounding islands. The oldest of the art work is believed to date from the period when the Burrup was an inland range, before the seas rose—before the inundation which drowned much of the surrounding landscape at least 9,000 years ago. Estimates of the age of the rocks vary, but they are ancient rocks. Amongst the most distinctive images are geometric designs, tracks of humans, animals and birds and a huge variety of both naturalistic and figurative representations of humans and animals, some so detailed apparently that you can identify the particular species. The rock art includes, for instance, depictions of Tasmanian tigers, which have been extinct on the mainland for over 3,000 years. I know there is debate about whether it is true in Tasmania but, on the mainland, it has certainly been that long. Some of the rocks form panels and composite images of daily activities such as hunting and clearly have been added to over very long periods of time. They form a continuous story.

Quite a number of different styles of engraving are represented—scored lines made with a very fine pointed rock, pecked marks, abraded lines and indents in the dark red-black glossy patina that covers the rocks. It is worth having a look at the images. The ‘fine execution’, the ‘dynamic nature’ of the images and the high degree of creativity have often been admired by those fortunate enough to have visited the site. For some, of course, it has been a revelatory experience.

Anthropologist Pat Vinnicombe—now, sadly, deceased—studied the area for over 15 years. Before her untimely death, she told Nicholas Rothwell:

I have the sense these carvings were bound up with instruction, initiation (that) the entire peninsula was a place of revelations, a teaching site linked to myths. There’s a sequence of images that leads from the ground level to the heights. I’m convinced this is what the Burrup is all about—all the sites are associated with stories, songs.

She said:

We tend, of course, to dissociate these things and see it as an art gallery—

A description that I mentioned earlier was used. She said:

You might as well tear a chapter from a book and hope to catch its plot as understand this place piece by piece.

Or, for that matter, to dismantle it piece by piece, which is what is happening now. The site has rightly been described as ‘the richest and most exciting region of rock engravings in Australia’, providing an ‘unusual and outstanding visual record of the Aboriginal responses to the rise of sea levels at the end of the last ice age’, which has been well described by the member for Calare.

The site tells the story of the long history of contact and the shared visual narratives between the Aboriginal

societies in the region, now close to the coast, and much further inland in Australia. The song lines and contacts are there to be seen. With European settlement, as was so often the case in our history—despite the Prime Minister's trying to expunge it—came devastation for the original inhabitants of the peninsula, the Yaburara people, from disease and, most notoriously, from so many being killed in the 1868 Flying Foam Massacre—something the Prime Minister would have us believe never occurred.

All who have seen even part of this extensive precinct, which covers 42 islands over a 45-kilometre radius, marvel at the range and diversity of the art work which, together with camp sites, middens, quarries and standing stones form an irreplaceable record of the lives of the Indigenous people from the first arrivals to the recent past. Yet we know little of it and, it would appear, care even less.

It retains great cultural and religious significance for the Aboriginal people of the area. Caroline Bird and Sylvia Hallam describe it in their report to the National Trust. They said:

... the entire Archipelago is a continuous cultural landscape providing a detailed record of both sacred and secular life.

We are privileged, if we have the privilege to go there, to glimpse the minds and identities of individual artists and communities. The National Trust has described the Dampier Rock Art Precinct as 'one of the world's pre-eminent sites of recorded human evolution and a pre-historic university'. Surely we do not want to destroy our history in this way.

It should be obvious to anyone that has read about it, who has been there, who has thought about it, that such a site is a very precious part of our heritage—of the world's heritage, importantly—deserving of careful study, which has not ever been completed, and preservation. Instead of the care and reverence which we would expect to be shown to a site with the significance of Stonehenge, the painted caves of Lascaux in France or the structures of Machu Picchu, the rock art precinct on the Burrup has been—and I underline this—scandalously abused, taking second place over more than 40 years to resource exploitation.

An unknown number of petroglyphs were turned to rubble when the Hamersley Iron port and rail infrastructure, the town of Dampier and the Dampier Salt facilities were constructed in the 1960s and 1970s, perhaps partly out of ignorance but there were warnings even at the time about the significance of this site. Without a thorough heritage assessment—and, frankly, one still has not been done—thousands more were destroyed when Woodside's North-West Shelf LNG plant and the associated port was constructed in the 1980s, whereas others were shifted from their original sites and placed in a temporary compound, recently

discovered to have been left undocumented and without proper conservation for 20 years.

Despite what is now becoming a persistent pressure on the state and federal governments to properly assess the cumulative effects of the sulphur and nitrogen emissions from the LNG plant, this research has only just begun and has already been criticised for failing to deal explicitly with the question of the effects of the emissions on the rock surfaces. It is one thing to say that the air is cleaner there than it is in the capital cities but what is its effect on the rock surfaces, since it is the colour contrast between the patina and the engraving which gives the carvings their distinctive character?

The most recent assault on the rock art—it does not stop—occurred during the construction by one of the Western Australian departments of an infrastructure corridor to facilitate further industrial development on the Burrup. It goes ahead every day, sadly. Every day many of the petroglyphs are exposed to possible theft and to vandalism, because there is still no proper management at the site: access to the site is not managed and there is no surveillance to prevent further desecration of the site. The local chamber of commerce and industry is deeply disturbed by these facts.

There have been a number of partial surveys of this matchless site. In fact, a lot of them were undertaken as part of the development approval process—so with the interests of the companies rather than heritage protection in mind. The site has never been the subject of a comprehensive inventory or analysis; it is long overdue. As a result, there is no generally accepted framework for understanding the various locations and cultural elements within the site. We know bits and pieces about it because of the work of some very dedicated people. Nor has a heritage management plan of any kind been devised; indeed the site is now plagued by a proliferation of plans and a lack of overall coordination between local, state and national governments, between industry and Indigenous interests and between tourism and heritage protection.

To add insult to injury, the recently released Western Australian Department of Conservation and Land Management Plan for tourism and visitor facilities on the Burrup Peninsula Conservation Reserve shows what I have to describe as a truly astounding disregard for even the most basic cultural heritage management principles. It is not as if we do not have those principles. The plan contains no reference, for example, to either the Burra Charter or the ICOMOS code of ethics, which should govern such plans if we are serious about heritage protection in Australia. The proposal would allow camping on previously inaccessible sites; the construction of visitors' facilities, which would ruin the integrity and ambience of the site; and uncontrolled visitation to areas which should be protected. All of these things point to a signal failure to understand the

responsibilities of heritage protection, let alone the significance of the site.

These omissions are not unique. The numerous government reports and management strategies all share a surprising lack of understanding of, and concern about, the heritage and scientific value of the area and the question of cultural resource management more generally. Successive governments—and I was Premier for a time so I include my own—have failed to appreciate the global significance of the site. Indeed, I am sad to say that the current government opposes heritage listing of ‘all or any part’ of the Burrup because of ‘potentially grave consequences’ for the resources sector—not to mention the potentially grave consequences for our heritage, for Indigenous heritage and for global heritage.

This evening I have heard of a report—which I hope is correct, but I am not sure of its significance—that Woodside is now prepared to endorse the heritage listing of this site. I will wait with interest to see whether there is some trade-off expected by the corporation. Perhaps I should not be so cynical, but 40 years of neglect tends to breed that. Although lip-service is sometimes paid in government documents to the site’s heritage significance, it has not been matched by any serious attempts to reconcile the conflicts between industrial development and this priceless site. It is really a matter of carving out increasingly large segments of it. Cultural resource management seems to be a foreign country both to the bureaucrats and to their ministers.

As if these problems were not grave enough in the history of the site, Woodside, as I have indicated, now propose further destruction of the site to accommodate a new LNG plant, a wharf and storage facilities—Pluto A and B. They have promised—and I was briefed by them recently—not to destroy more than 10 per cent of the rock art on top of the probably 30 per cent or so that may have already been destroyed or set aside for industrial development. It is as if this is a series of unrelated elements and you can just pull bits of it out. But much more of the rock art will be stranded, even with their proposition in the moonscape that is an LNG plant. It is not a friendly place to heritage of this kind. Tragically, the state minister for Indigenous affairs has already given her approval for the company to destroy or move the ancient rock art, which will affect up to 150 rock art panels.

While it is probable that any further concentration of industrial activity in the area will pose a serious pollution threat, there is already a cleared site—where there has been destruction—adjacent to the existing plant that state and federal governments could insist be used by Woodside, instead of allowing them to undertake further destruction and removal of petroglyphs. Woodside have claimed that the other joint venture partners are refusing to allow access to the site, which is jointly

managed. In letters to the National Trust, however, Shell, Chevron, BHP Billiton and the others all indicate—almost in the same language—that they are willing to negotiate. Should they fail to show good faith in these discussions—and perhaps they might because Woodside is now on a tight timetable and these are all competitors—the state, in my view, can easily intervene to force an outcome; they have the power. It is not clear to me, in any case, why Onslow, which seems to be a far superior location and which has already been selected by BHP Billiton for similar activity, should not be fully evaluated and costed before the Burrup is sacrificed yet again to the great god mammon.

There is no limit to the ways in which money can be made. We are in the midst of an unprecedented boom, especially in my state. But every petroglyph that is destroyed on the Burrup is destroyed forever. Woodside could, and still can—and, with the assistance of the state government, maybe it is signalling that it is prepared to—put all its considerable financial and intellectual resources into building an adequate LNG processing plant somewhere else. But, if you wanted to recreate even a single petroglyph, you would need at the very least a time machine; you would need to become the appropriate custodian of the cultural meaning of these rock engravings; then you would need to learn how to make them; and, finally, with the hard work finished, you would only have to wait 10,000 years or more.

Former Liberal resources minister Colin Barnett has come to a similar understanding. I have had recent conversations with him about this. He said in a recent parliamentary speech: ‘What was regarded as acceptable in the 1960s and 1970s and perhaps even in the 1980s is now unacceptable. We cannot tolerate that type of approach for the future. We have a responsibility to protect this most significant and impressive asset.’ Hear, hear.

Local Aboriginal people too have clearly stated in meetings with government officials that they do not want any further development on the Burrup, although they feel constrained from publicly stating their objections because they believe that an agreement they have with the state government precludes them from doing so. I hope the state government will tell them that that is not so. They fear that they will incur severe financial penalties if they object—and they do object.

There is a glimmer of hope in the placing of this site on the National Heritage List following the recent, very strongly argued recommendation from the Australian Heritage Council, in that that may well force a belated heritage management plan. The assessor described the Dampier Archipelago site as ‘exceptional’, ‘outstanding’ and ‘the richest and most exciting region of rock engravings in Australia’—probably in the world, in fact.

But the Burrup, sadly, may again be sacrificed to industrial imperatives. The minister has delayed his decision—for as much as a year, he said a couple of days ago—to allow for ‘greater public consultation’, saying that of course some rock art will have to be destroyed. Why? At the same time, as we know, he has rushed through amendments to the relevant Commonwealth legislation to allow him to overrule the council’s recommendations if he or the government so chooses and to delay it indefinitely. Meanwhile, Flemington Racecourse has been listed with alacrity, and the Prime Minister has demanded that the PNG government not allow a mining proposal on the Kokoda Trail because of its value to Australia’s heritage. At the same time, of course, the Burrup is squarely in the firing line. In the end, it is all about what you value.

Anyone who has been paying attention to the debate in Australian politics over the last few years cannot have failed to notice that there is a lot of talk about values: Australian values, lists of values on classroom walls together with the flags and functioning flagpoles—a condition for receiving Commonwealth funding—and values required to be recited as a condition of receiving a visa. The tragedy with a lot of this talk is that the actions of those reciting the values are often at odds with their prescriptions. I will not say anything more about that except that, as my mother used to tell me, actions speak louder than words.

And so it is with heritage. Heritage, of course, is about values—or, more precisely, what we value from our past, what we are prepared to protect, conserve and pass on to future generations. Knowledge and experience of our heritage gives meaning to our lives, inspires us and contributes to our collective sense of identity. The sites, landscapes and places which we are galvanised to protect are, in some ways, an indication of what matters to us and what we think of ourselves. Our actions do speak louder than words, as they do on the Dampier Peninsula.

I think it is no accident that successive generations of Western Australians and their governments, state and federal, have not seen fit to protect the precious heritage that is the Burrup rock art precinct. It is not that voices have not been raised in its defence, but they have been overwhelmed by the siren call of development, louder and more seductive in Western Australia than in any other part of the nation and far more important to most people than our Indigenous heritage. As one commentator put it: ‘Indigenous significance isn’t significant enough’ to galvanise us into action. But what is at stake here is even greater than the value of the site to Aboriginal Australians, great though that is. This is a unique site whose value is to all of us—indeed, to humankind. Its desecration and neglect constitutes a measurable impoverishment of our world. Surely, in the light of all the previous mistakes we have

made, it is possible to avoid repeating them. Ignorance certainly cannot any longer be an excuse.

Mr BALDWIN (Paterson—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Industry, Tourism and Resources) (8.41 pm)—In summing up the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Amendment Bill 2005*, can I say that it reflects the Australian government’s commitment to protecting heritage and ensuring that Australians benefit from appropriate international cultural exchanges. The amendments to the act will ensure that Australians continue to have opportunities to see in Australia significant Indigenous cultural heritage objects that are owned by institutions overseas. The amendments will encourage international cultural exchanges. They will remove an uncertainty that would discourage overseas institutions from ever allowing items from their collection to be exhibited in Australia. The amendments to the act will also provide for the repeal of the Victoria-specific provisions of the act, including the scheme for Victoria alone that is set out in part IIA of the act.

In 1987, the act was extended to include provisions that that would apply only in Victoria, at the request of the Victorian government of the day. These provisions now prevent new Victorian legislation for Aboriginal heritage protection from coming into effect. The Victorian government wrote to the Australian government in 2005 to explore how this obstacle could be removed. All other states and territories have legislation to protect this heritage. The amendments remove the obstacle to Victorian legislation and allow a sensible sharing of roles and responsibilities for the protection of cultural heritage in Victoria. The proposal is sensible for the Australian government and for Victoria and for more comprehensive and coordinated administration of Aboriginal cultural heritage in Australia. Following repeal of the Victoria-specific provisions, the Australian government legislation will provide the same level of protection in Victoria that it provides for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage in other parts of Australia.

We do commend the bill to the House, but having noted the proposed amendments provided by the opposition I have to say that the government cannot support those amendments. There are various reasons. One is that the Australian government stands by its commitment, as stated by Senator Hill in 2003, to reform the legislation. The Minister for the Environment and Heritage has written to his state and territory colleagues commencing a consultative process to reform the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Act 1984. This act will be reformed.

Following former Senator Hill’s 2003 commitment on behalf of the government to comprehensive reform of this legislation, the government has not been idle in pursuing reform, as is evidenced by the fact that,

firstly, in January 2004, the government transferred responsibility for the reform from ATSIC to the Department of the Environment and Heritage. Secondly, in March 2004, the department consulted Indigenous representatives on the reforms, but it postponed consultations during the implementation of the government's new arrangements in Indigenous affairs. Thirdly, in October 2005, the government introduced the current amendments to the Senate.

The Australian government's heritage reforms under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 provide protection for places on the National Heritage List, the Commonwealth Heritage List and the World Heritage List, including places of Indigenous heritage value. This protection is on top of protection under the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Act 1984 and can apply to a broad range of Indigenous heritage. Both acts acknowledge the importance of a national approach that recognises the responsibilities of states and territories in protecting Indigenous heritage places and other heritage.

Not all of the recommendations of the Evatt report will be applicable in 2006. The government will consult Indigenous people and other stakeholders to hear their views on issues, including issues identified in the Evatt report. The government concurs with the member for Fraser, Mr McMullan, on this point. A further public review will delay reforms and is not needed to identify the issues. The Evatt report remains valuable as a source of information and proposals for reform. Additionally, in 1998, there was a report from the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Native Title and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Land Fund on the reform of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Act 1984. The Department of the Environment and Heritage has already sought an exemption to the Legislative Instruments Act 2003, the effect of which would be that declarations made under sections 10 and 12 of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Act 1984 would not be subject to the sunset provisions of the Legislative Instruments Act 2003.

We urge all members to support the bill, but we cannot accept the amendment moved by the opposition.

Question put:

That the words proposed to be omitted (**Mr Albanese's** amendment) stand part of the question.

The House divided. [8.51 pm]

(The Deputy Speaker—Hon. DGH Adams)

Ayes.....	71
Noes.....	<u>53</u>
Majority.....	18

AYES

- Abbott, A.J.
- Bailey, F.E.
- Baker, M.
- Barresi, P.A.
- Billson, B.F.
- Broadbent, R.
- Cadman, A.G.
- Ciobo, S.M.
- Downer, A.J.G.
- Dutton, P.C.
- Ferguson, M.D.
- Gambaro, T.
- Georgiou, P.
- Hardgrave, G.D.
- Henry, S.
- Hull, K.E. *
- Johnson, M.A.
- Keenan, M.
- Kelly, J.M.
- Lindsay, P.J.
- Markus, L.
- McArthur, S. *
- Moylan, J.E.
- Nelson, B.J.
- Prosser, G.D.
- Randall, D.J.
- Robb, A.
- Schultz, A.
- Secker, P.D.
- Smith, A.D.H.
- Southcott, A.J.
- Tollner, D.W.
- Tuckey, C.W.
- Vale, D.S.
- Wakelin, B.H.
- Wood, J.

- Andrews, K.J.
- Baird, B.G.
- Baldwin, R.C.
- Bartlett, K.J.
- Bishop, J.I.
- Brough, M.T.
- Causley, I.R.
- Cobb, J.K.
- Draper, P.
- Elson, K.S.
- Forrest, J.A.
- Gash, J.
- Haase, B.W.
- Hartsuyker, L.
- Hockey, J.B.
- Jensen, D.
- Jull, D.F.
- Kelly, D.M.
- Laming, A.
- Macfarlane, I.E.
- May, M.A.
- Mirabella, S.
- Nairn, G.R.
- Neville, P.C.
- Pyne, C.
- Richardson, K.
- Ruddock, P.M.
- Scott, B.C.
- Slipper, P.N.
- Somlyay, A.M.
- Thompson, C.P.
- Truss, W.E.
- Turnbull, M.
- Vasta, R.
- Washer, M.J.

NOES

- Albanese, A.N.
- Beazley, K.C.
- Bird, S.
- Burke, A.E.
- Byrne, A.M.
- Danby, M. *
- Elliot, J.
- Ellis, K.
- Ferguson, L.D.T.
- Fitzgibbon, J.A.
- Georganas, S.
- Gibbons, S.W.
- Grierson, S.J.
- Hall, J.G. *
- Hayes, C.P.
- Kerr, D.J.C.
- Lawrence, C.M.
- McClelland, R.B.
- Melham, D.
- O'Connor, B.P.
- Owens, J.
- Price, L.R.S.
- Ripoll, B.F.
- Sawford, R.W.
- Smith, S.F.
- Thomson, K.J.
- Wilkie, K.
- Andren, P.J.
- Bevis, A.R.
- Bowen, C.
- Burke, A.S.
- Crean, S.F.
- Edwards, G.J.
- Ellis, A.L.
- Emerson, C.A.
- Ferguson, M.J.
- Garrett, P.
- George, J.
- Gillard, J.E.
- Griffin, A.P.
- Hatton, M.J.
- Irwin, J.
- King, C.F.
- Livermore, K.F.
- McMullan, R.F.
- Murphy, J.P.
- O'Connor, G.M.
- Plibersek, T.
- Quick, H.V.
- Roxon, N.L.
- Sercombe, R.C.G.
- Swan, W.M.
- Vamvakinou, M.

* denotes teller

Question agreed to.

Original question agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Third Reading

Mr BALDWIN (Paterson—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Industry, Tourism and Resources) (8.59 pm)—by leave—I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

ADJOURNMENT

The SPEAKER—Order! It being almost 9.00 pm, I propose the question:

That the House do now adjourn.

Murray River

Ms KATE ELLIS (Adelaide) (8.59 pm)—I rise to raise the issue of the River Murray and to talk about how, as a South Australian MP, I have been utterly appalled by a series of comments that have been made in this House in recent weeks and how I remain deeply frustrated by the approach of the Howard government in tackling this issue of major national importance. I put on the record once again the serious concerns I have for the environmental health of the Murray, the significant visual changes that I have witnessed with my own eyes to the river in the South Australia and the devastating impact that the current drought is having on regional communities across the country. I have spoken in this chamber on issues related to the River Murray on several occasions, but I have been appalled in the past few weeks to find a lack of understanding of these issues from some in the Howard government.

On the 18th of last month a number of extraordinary statements were made in this House by MPs in response to a matter of public interest debate on effective rural policy. Before I elaborate, I will say from the outset that I have great sympathy for the Australian farmers who are doing it tough in the face of a drought that is devastating many parts of the country. I recognise and thank them for the contribution that they make to Australia's way of life and to our economy.

We are at a point now where the vast majority of Australians are so concerned about the health of the River Murray that they want immediate action from their government to rectify this problem. This is certainly the case in South Australia, where an effective Save the Murray campaign has been running for some years. We also have our own minister for the River Murray at a state government level who is widely acknowledged as having done an outstanding job. The last thing we need is for irresponsible MPs upstream to try to put the debate in reverse gear by claiming that the Murray is in fact in a fine condition and that the scientists who say otherwise are just fools.

But this is what we saw on 18 October in this chamber when coalition MP and member for Page, Ian Causley, argued that Professor Peter Cullen of the Wentworth Group, who is one of Australia's leading water experts, was simply wrong. In an insulting attack the member for Page said:

Professor ... Cullen parades as a scientist ... But I have to say that the two comments I remember clearly were, firstly, about the Murray-Darling River ... when they said that the Murray-Darling was dying. In fact, the quality of the Murray River downstream is now better than it was 10 or 15 years ago ...

Now everybody in South Australia knows how absurd these comments are. The member for Kennedy, Bob Katter, joined the attack on Professor Cullen by claiming:

... the salinity levels on the middle Murray and the lower Murray ... are the lowest they have ever been in recorded history—

and saying that the Murray is not dying. Extraordinarily, he also stated that he had been to Murray Bridge and he saw that there was water from bank to bank.

Well I too have been to Murray Bridge. In fact, I grew up along the Murray, not very far away from Murray Bridge, in a town called Mannum. I had the opportunity to revisit the place of my childhood at Easter. I stood on the banks of the river and was absolutely shocked to see that the currents that used to drag us down the river when we were small children were no longer evident. In fact, the river was almost completely still. I have seen with my own eyes the changes that have taken place since I was a child; the obvious and tragic changes that have reshaped our great river in a way that perhaps nobody could have predicted and which we must now all endeavour to turn around.

It has been said before that South Australians should stop whingeing about what happens upstream. It has also been said that inner city MPs have no place in commenting on rural matters like the River Murray. I absolutely disagree. The River Murray goes to the heart of what Australians value about our community. We are proud of our regional heritage and we are proud of our stunning, vast environment. In Adelaide, we draw more than 40 per cent of our water from the Murray. During droughts, this dependence increases to more than 90 per cent. We absolutely have a right to be here calling for action. So people can continue to call me a whingeing South Australian, but I will continue to raise matters and to fight for a strong and healthy River Murray for as long as I am in this House, and, in fact, longer.

Today I call on the Howard government to end the contradictory rhetoric and to start making the hard decisions that are so vital for the survival of this great river. The people of Australia deserve this; the people of South Australia, whose livelihood is dependent upon

a strong Murray River, deserve this; and the people of Adelaide, the people whom I represent, who rely upon this great river for their water source, also deserve this. I call on the Prime Minister to stop trying to excuse himself from the table and to instead commit to protecting this river for the sake of all Australians and for the sake of future generations. This is something we will continue to push our alternative plan on. (*Time expired*)

Richmond Electorate: Richmond Remembers

Mrs ELLIOT (Richmond) (9.04 pm)—It gives me great pleasure to rise to speak tonight on a very important local community event that happened in my electorate of Richmond recently. In the lead up to Remembrance Day, we had the first ever occasion of Richmond Remembers. Richmond Remembers was a series of events and exhibitions designed to honour our local veterans. The occasion was held over several days so that our whole community could properly pay our respects to all those who sacrificed so much over so many conflicts. In Richmond we are very fortunate to have one of the highest populations of veterans. Our veterans are an integral part of our community—they are our relatives, our friends, our neighbours, our parents and our grandparents.

Richmond Remembers was launched on 3 November with the unveiling of the Long Tan plaque at the South Tweed Sports Club's Vietnam Veterans' memorial gardens. It was a fantastic launch and I would like to give full credit to both the South Tweed Sports Club and to Peter Crocket for their organisation of the launch. Peter Crocket, who we all affectionately know as 'Davy' Crocket, is a Vietnam veteran and a good mate. It was great to see so many local veterans and their families present, and of course it was wonderful to hear the St Joseph's choir sing with the legendary Normie Rowe, who travelled down to the Tweed for the day.

Later that evening at Club Banora there was a black tie function followed by the premiere of the movie *A Soldier's Shots*, which is a movie about local veterans created by local film maker Alison Flynn. Over the weekend there were yarn days and opportunities to meet local authors from the veteran community. We really are blessed to have such a wealth of talent amongst our local veteran community.

The triumph of Richmond Remembers to my mind was the schools day on Monday. Local school children came along to talk to veterans and to see their memorabilia. The children were so fascinated by the photos, uniforms, letters and medals on display. They listened with absolute attention to the tales the veterans had to tell about their experiences. It was so moving to hear the children talk amongst themselves with such respect for those who have served our nation, and one student was so proud that one of the veterans there was his

grandfather. By the end of the morning the whole school had adopted the veteran as their grandfather. The children also made poppies for the poppy wall in honour of our veterans.

I think what was most important about Richmond Remembers was the level of awareness raised within the community, and that is truly commendable for all those involved. The children were able to gain a level of insight from that face-to-face contact with the veterans that can never be learned from books. I would like to add that the overwhelming lesson that the children took away from their day was the importance of peace.

Our veterans are truly remarkable people. It was so wonderful to speak to our veterans on many occasions throughout this event. I know how much each of them enjoyed participating in the overall project and that they also appreciated the opportunity to bring greater awareness to our local community. They appreciated being able to speak and tell their stories on so many different occasions, whether it was to young children or speaking with other veterans.

I am pleased to report that following the resounding success that was Richmond Remembers the community is very keen to see this happen on an annual basis. We are all very committed to making sure next year's events are even bigger and better throughout the entire electorate. As I said, Richmond has one of the highest veteran populations in the country. They are certainly very pleased to be involved and want to make it a bigger and better event.

I would like to acknowledge the great work of the local Department of Veterans' Affairs office for all the work they did in preparing for this event. As you can imagine, there was a huge amount of preparation involved coordinating so many members of the community—veterans groups, schools and local clubs. In particular I would like to acknowledge Rosemary Beard, whose dedication and commitment really is an inspiration to us all. Rosemary is held in very high esteem by the local veteran community for the tireless work she does for them always.

In closing I would like to say that Richmond Remembers was truly a community initiative. I would like to congratulate and thank all of the people involved, and there were so many. The success was due to the involvement of the whole community. It was the community coming together to remember the sacrifice and commitment of so many. I particularly thank all those from the Department of Veterans' Affairs local office; the local RSL clubs, which worked tirelessly with all veterans in our area; all the children and local schools that participated either in coming along to the yarn days, talking to veterans, participating in laying poppies on the poppy wall or in all of the school projects that they did—they put in so much time and so much

effort it was fantastic to see—and also to all the local clubs which supported this event. (*Time expired*)

Hon. Sir Harold Young KCMG

Dr SOUTHCOTT (Boothby) (9.10 pm)—Last week Sir Harold Young, a former President of the Senate, passed away. I would like to extend my condolences to his widow, Lady Margaret Young, and his four children and his grandchildren. I had the privilege of knowing Sir Harold Young many years after he had served in the Senate. I got to know him recently, whereby probably twice a year a group of current South Australian members and senators would have lunch with some of the former members and senators. We would often gather at the Kent Town Hotel or the Adelaide Bowling Club. One of my predecessors in Boothby, John McLeay, would come and Sir Harold Young would come, as would Dr Jim Forbes. I know that Sir Harold always enjoyed these lunches. It was always a great time for the old and bold to give their advice on current events. They would be very interested in what was going on but they would also have their own perspective on it as well.

Sir Harold, in a fairly longstanding tradition, was involved in a lot of what we would now call agripolitics groups. He was a vice president of the United Farmers and Graziers Association, he was a president of the local district in Wallaroo, he was on the South Australian state wheat research committee and he was also President of the Liberal Country League State Council of South Australia. He was educated at local state schools and then at Prince Alfred College. He worked as a primary producer and was involved in not just the grazier side of things but also as a member of the Australian Wool Industry Conference.

He was elected to the Senate in 1968 and served as a government whip and then as an opposition whip in the Senate. He was Chairman of Committees and then, when Sir Condor Laucke, another from country South Australia, retired in 1981 as President of the Senate, Sir Harold Young was elected over Senator Reg Withers to become President of the Senate. He served in that position for two years and then retired in 1983. When he retired a number of people paid tribute to him. Senator Tony Messner said this:

In the time that I have known my very great friend Sir Harold Young, which is something like 16 years, he has always been one of the most pleasant personalities—certainly a person with whom all of us had some identification of personal feeling. To my mind he was one of the most popular politicians in South Australia. Whenever we travelled together throughout the State, however remote the locality, he would either have a relative in the immediate vicinity or be well known to people in the area.

As I said, I had the opportunity to know Sir Harold in more recent times. He was also a great lover of cricket. One of his great loves was to attend the test match at Adelaide Oval. You would have to get there fairly

early. He would arrive early and take a seat square to the wicket in the members stand. On Friday the Adelaide test will begin, and certainly I will take a moment to think of Sir Harold Young. It will seem very strange without him being there.

He made a great contribution. We heard speeches in the condolence motion today from the Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition and others. He was a very fine example of a parliamentarian. He made a great contribution for South Australia. He will be missed. I offer my condolences to his wife, Lady Margaret, and his four children and grandchildren.

Water

Mr KATTER (Kennedy) (9.14 pm)—One of the most important facts to know about the geography of Australia is that the Murray-Darling system only has 22 million megalitres of water in it. Australia has a population of 20 million and we have tried to jam into the golden boomerang of the south-eastern rim of Australia four-fifths of our population and half of our agricultural production coming off the Murray-Darling.

In reflecting upon the reason why this is, one must look to the underlying cause. John Stuart Mill's *On Liberty* and Alexis de Tocqueville's *Democracy in America*—those two famous books which underpinned the thinking on the establishment of democracies throughout the world—talked about the tyranny of the majority. They said that whilst democracy is a desirable system it is not necessarily a benign system. It will simply reflect the will of the majority and it may well be that the thoughts, feelings and aspirations of the majority impose tyranny upon the minority.

I went for a tour through Victoria for a day on a speaking engagement I had long agreed to do. We went through 30 towns in Victoria and at the hotels I counted a collective total of only five cars. We may assume that the people of Victoria have suddenly become teetotalers or we may assume that these towns are bereft of people. I read in the newspapers while I was down there that Mr Kennett, now head of the health council that handles depression, announced that every four days a farmer in Victoria commits suicide. As a nation, should we not stagger with the horror of that statistic?

In one of my own industries, the sugar industry, we have a suicide every month. Our cattle numbers in this country are down 18 per cent, our sheep numbers are down nearly 50 per cent, our sugar production is down 12 per cent, our milk production is down 10 per cent and our butter and cheese production is down 19 per cent. When will this parliament realise that agriculture is vanishing from this country and manufacturing has all but gone?

The United States had very great thinkers to draw up its constitution: Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin and James Madison. They included in the constitution

a separation of powers—which, of course, means that the majority does not take all—and similarly a primaries arrangement which ensures some sort of protection against the tyranny of the majority for those people who live outside of the big cities of the United States. Ivan Malloy, a lecturer, was speaking at a meeting I was at recently and he said that we are the only country left using this primitive system of two parties with parliamentarians voting along party lines. In the United States they have a two-party system, yes, but they do not vote along party lines.

So, whilst Australia tries to water four-fifths of its population on one-tenth of its water and grow half of its agricultural production off a measly little 22 million megalitres, north-western Australia has 90 million megalitres. It could be the great juggernaut. North-western Australia has 90 million megalitres, the gulf has 130 million megalitres and the north-east coast north of Sarina has another 80 million megalitres. So we have 300 million megalitres. We could send two million or three million megalitres down to you in the Murray-Darling and not even notice it has gone. I sadly relate to this parliament that the government of Queensland has decided that we should only access of that 300 million megalitres and the 200 million in Queensland a measly 100,000 megalitres— (*Time expired*)

Northern Territory Crime

Mr TOLLNER (Solomon) (9.19 pm)—Recently there have been plenty of stories in the local Darwin media about a crime epidemic that has been sweeping the northern suburbs of Darwin. I was a bit concerned to read these reports and I decided to send out a survey to constituents in the suburbs of Karama and Malak—suburbs that seem to be the main hot spot for these concerns. I was quite surprised at the level of response that I received. I received a huge number of calls, letters and emails, all from people saying that crime gangs, hoons and drunken itinerants were out of control in their suburbs.

I decided to host a community crime forum in those two suburbs. I tied the forum in with a visit from the federal Minister for Justice and Customs, Chris Ellison, who was visiting Darwin at the time. I asked him to come along to the forum so that he could hear the concerns firsthand. The main issues that were raised by local residents were gang violence, youth gangs, street crime, vandalism, hooning in cars, graffiti, drunken itinerants in parks and, of course, the fact that there are not enough police on the beat and that police are taking too long to attend incidents.

The Territory Labor government at the last Territory election promised to be very tough in the area of law and order. They promised an extra 200 police, but I am informed by the police association that, while they may well have employed 200 extra police, more than that number have left the force because of the conditions

that they are employed under. So, although there have been 200 more police employed, the numbers of police in the Northern Territory have not increased at all—and I am not even talking about remote areas here. So, by failing to tackle crime in the northern suburbs, it is clear that the Northern Territory government has failed the local community.

To decisively deal with this problem, we also need community involvement. Over the last 12 or 18 months, I have been working very closely with Neighbourhood Watch and have assisted our Northern Territory representative, Mr Ken Mildred—who has been appointed as the inaugural president of Neighbourhood Watch Australasia—in his dealings with the minister. He has been very generous with his time and has assisted me in meeting many members of Neighbourhood Watch. I have also met with many other community groups. I have assisted these groups to receive funding from the federal government's Community Crime Prevention grants to improve community safety.

As a start, Mission Australia in Darwin has received around \$148,000 to educate young people on the consequences of crime and to help break the cycle of crime, Anglicare has received \$75,000 to deliver innovative self-defence classes for young women and the North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency has received \$120,000 for rehabilitation programs for family violence offenders. This is only a start. There is much more to be done. I will continue to pressure the Northern Territory government to increase police patrols in our suburbs and to provide more equipment for law enforcement agencies.

I found it quite interesting that, following the crime forum in the northern suburbs, more police magically appeared on the beat in those particular suburbs, a mobile police station was set up and crime levels were reduced—simply by holding a community crime forum in those suburbs. I think this points out that, where you do shine a light on the Northern Territory government's inadequacies, they will respond. By working with community groups and local residents, we can make a real difference—and that is what I aim to do during the rest of the time I spend in this place. Crime is something that should be controlled and needs to be controlled. I am very keen to work with local residents to ensure that we can control these issues. (*Time expired*)

Paterson Citizen of the Year Awards

Mr BALDWIN (Paterson—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Industry, Tourism and Resources) (9.24 pm)—Tonight I rise to pay recognition to the fine, outstanding volunteers in my electorate of Paterson. Last Saturday we celebrated the fourth year of the Paterson Citizen of the Year awards. There are four categories: Paterson Citizen of the Year, Corporate

Citizen of the Year, Sports Achiever of the Year and Young Citizen of the Year.

There were 19 nominees for Citizen of the Year: June Toms for her work on the Ladies Auxiliary of the Royal Volunteer Coastal Patrol at Nelson Bay; Ellen Auriac for 12 years of service to Coolongolook Public School; Eric Dates for his service to St John's Ambulance Service, Raymond Terrace Neighbourhood Watch and diabetes support and fundraising; Kevin McDonald, a founding member of the Hunter region botanic gardens; James Olsen, President of the Dungog Branch of the National Servicemen's Association and for his service through Rotary; Nancy Carter for her work with Forster Salvation Army Store and care in the community; Kevin Haskew for his volunteering with Meals on Wheels, the Tea Gardens Progress Association and for his working on local preservation and local environmental initiatives; Dawn Engel, Secretary of the Tea Gardens Country Club and for her work on the preservation of local history; Doreen Bradley for her work with Legacy and war widows and as a community advocate on crime issues; Helen Kearney for her contribution to musical education; David Knight for his service with the Tanilba Bay Rural Fire Service and Tilligerry Scouts; Doyne Lanhan for her environmental service to Karuah Valley Landcare and for being a mentor and worker for the Stroud Anglican Church; Donna Hall for her work as a volunteer in health and education and as an advocate for cultural issues; John Ward for his work as a volunteer carer at One Mile Beach; Leah Bastian, who runs a self-esteem course for teenage girls and operates youth groups and breakfast clubs; Peter Mason, a crimes issues advocate; Sean Brennan, a crimes issues advocate in the Tilligerry area; Jean Olley for her work in environmental protection and preservation; and Ted Bickford.

But there can only be one winner and that winner was Ted Bickford. For more than a decade, Ted Bickford has been known as the graffiti buster in Forster-Tuncurry. Starting with a bicycle and a backpack filled with his wife's kitchen cleaning aids, Ted took to removing graffiti from public and private property in the Great Lakes Shire. Since those humble beginnings, Ted has been provided with a vehicle by the Great Lakes Shire Council. But Ted's efforts have been expended on more than just removing graffiti; he has also forged strong friendships and links with and has been a mentor to many young people in the area who have witnessed Ted cleaning up the facilities that they use, such as the skate park. He has given many former graffiti offenders support and encouragement to become young adults who now take pride in their community rather than destroy it.

There were five nominees for Corporate Citizen of the Year: Rodney Starr of the Port Stephens Veterinary Hospital; Matt and Catherine Bliss from Coastline

Plumbing; Allen and Sue Ray from Smarty Plants; and Brian and Marie Melick from McDonalds Forster; and the winner, Shane Bailey. Shane Bailey works for Hunter Workways and is a team leader in the Green Corps program. Shane has been awarded the Corporate Citizen of the Year because of his efforts in mentoring young people. He works daily with Green Corps participants who undertake environmental projects in Port Stephens over a six-month period. But, instead of a leading a nine-to-five life and clocking off when the participants go home, Shane goes the extra distance by encouraging participants into the workforce, providing career advice and being a referee to employers. His strong connection with Green Corps members and his passion for providing training in the environmental sector mean that he earns their trust and encourages them to be the best they can be, whatever career path they might decide to take. Shane is a young ambassador for our region and is a future leader in our community.

There were four nominees for Sports Achiever of the Year: Carl Leonard, from Wirreanda Public School, who has done some outstanding work in the *Sun-Herald* City to Surf program, particularly with the girls primary school team section; Nicholas Moroney, who won his sixth Australian high jump title this year and qualified for the Commonwealth Games high jump final; Jessica Hickson, who got first place in the Open Women's Australia Surfing Titles, first place in the Billabong girls Easter pro junior and other senior places; and the winner, Heath Francis. Heath Francis is no stranger to accepting awards. He has been competing at a world level in running since 1998 and represented Australia at the Sydney Paralympics in 2000, at Athens in 2004 and at several world championships. This year he won gold at the Commonwealth Games in the 200 metres and he won three gold medals at the IPC World Championships in Holland in September for the 100 metres, 200 metres and 400 metres. On top of these sporting achievements, Heath is studying two degrees and gives talks to schools, clubs and community groups.

Last, but by no means least, the Young Citizen of the Year nominees were Luke Tahnae, Madeline Toms, Lauren Abberton, Adam Frost, Jake Rudge, Ryan McNeil and Penelope Parker. The winner was Penelope Parker.

The SPEAKER—Order! It being 9.30 pm, the debate is interrupted. The House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 12.30 pm, in accordance with the resolution agreed to on 16 October 2006.

House adjourned at 9.30 pm

NOTICES

The following notices were given:

Mr Baird to move:

That the House:

- (1) notes that Nobel Peace Prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi, General Secretary of the National League for Democracy in Myanmar:
 - (a) remains under house arrest and incommunicado;
 - (b) has been in prison or under house arrest for 11 of the past 16 years; and
 - (c) is only one of over 1,100 political prisoners in Myanmar;
- (2) calls on the State Peace and Development Council of Myanmar to:
 - (a) allow its citizens to peacefully exercise their rights to freedom of association and assembly; and
 - (b) immediately and unconditionally release all people who have been arrested for the peaceful exercise of these rights;
- (3) notes that the UN Security Council has now placed Myanmar on its listing for review and encourages the Security Council to closely monitor the concerning human rights record of the current Burmese Government; and
- (4) expresses its concern regarding the 500,000 displaced people in Myanmar and the further 150,000 displaced people on the Thai border in refugee camps. (*Notice given 27 November 2006.*)

Mr Cadman to move:

That the House:

- (1) notes the maturing relationship between Vietnam and Australia, the high-level contacts between Prime Ministers, Australia's development cooperation program of approximately \$81 million per year and the strong people-to-people links;
- (2) notes continuing international concern about human rights issues in Vietnam, including gaoling, administrative detention and harassment of human rights activists for their advocacy of democracy and religious freedom;
- (3) notes the importance of addressing the cases of individuals such as The Most Venerable Thich Quang Do and Thich Huyen Quang, Hoa Hao Elder Mr Le Quang Liem, Pastor Nguyen Cong Chinh, Dr Pham Hong Son, journalists Nguyen Khac Toan and Hguyen Vu Binh and many ethnic Montagnard people such as Siu Boch, A Brih and Y Tim Bya;
- (4) calls on the Vietnamese Government to observe its international obligations on human rights, including the provision of free and fair elections; and
- (5) notes the Australian Government's active support for, and promotion of, democratic freedoms and human rights in Vietnam, including through the annual human rights dialogue and other cooperation programs, and encourages the Government to continue these efforts. (*Notice given 27 November 2006.*)

Monday, 27 November 2006

The **DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr McMullan)** took the chair at 4.01 pm.

COMMITTEES

Procedure Committee

Report

Debate resumed from 31 October, on motion by **Mrs May**:

That the House take note of the report.

Ms HOARE (Charlton) (4.01 pm)—Earlier this year the Standing Committee on Procedure decided to undertake a fairly wide-ranging reference relating to the maintenance of the standing and sessional orders. The maintenance of the standing and sessional orders is an ongoing issue that we have to deal with. It allows the Procedure Committee to review the sessional orders which have been put in place following its recommendations. Usually, the sessional orders would be in place for a set period of time. Sometimes it can be for the term of the parliament; sometimes it can be for 12 months; sometimes it can be for a period of 18 months. But following the application of sessional orders, the Procedure Committee will then go on to review those orders and to recommend or otherwise that those sessional orders become standing orders. So the sessional orders are basically interim orders which the Procedure Committee has investigated and then recommended that they become orders to ensure the smooth running of the parliament.

The report that has been tabled deals with the anticipation rule, arrangements for debate of committee and delegation reports in the Main Committee, the duration of members' statements in the Main Committee, debate times for dissent motions, provisions relating to the maintenance of order in the Main Committee, and three other minor matters.

I will deal first with the presentation of committee reports. The Procedure Committee recommended that a sessional order be put in place to allow committee reports to be discussed in the Main Committee. There was some discussion about when this would occur and whether the reports would actually be presented in the Main Committee or in the House. After a lot of discussion, we agreed that the reports would be presented in the House of Representatives at the usual time, before private members' business on a sitting Monday, but that those committee reports could then be referred for discussion in the Main Committee. This expands the amount of time that members have to discuss committee reports. We are all on very many standing committees in this place and we all know that we put a lot of work into the final reports that are the results of a particular inquiry and into making recommendations to the government for action on particular issues.

In previous times, before this sessional order was introduced, it was usually only the chair and deputy chair who had an opportunity in the House of Representatives to make statements for five minutes on those reports. Over the past 12 months many committee reports have been referred to the Main Committee which allows committee members as well as people who are not committee members but have an interest in a subject to make comment on those reports. One example I can think of which had a lot of members speaking on it was a report, from the Standing Committee on Family and Human Services, on child support which all members had an opportunity to come here and speak on.

During the trial of the sessional order until 9 October there were, in total, 14 reports debated in the Main Committee for a total of six hours and 26 minutes, with 38 members of parliament participating in those debates. However, we have noticed that there is still some unfamiliarity amongst members in relation to this procedure, so we would urge committee chairs and deputy chairs to encourage members of committees to participate in those debates and to remind them that this opportunity is now available to them. The Procedure Committee recommendation was that these arrangements now become part of standing orders.

The second recommendation I will deal with is on changes in relation to delegation reports. Currently, delegation reports are formally presented to the Speaker in the time preceding private members' business in the House of Representatives main chamber, and two delegation members have an opportunity of five minutes each to speak on the delegation. A lot of private members' business and private members' motions are waiting to be debated during that private members' time, and the committee thought that more opportunity should be allowed in the House of Representatives to debate private members' business. This recommendation allows for the opportunity for a delegation report to be presented to the Speaker not necessarily when parliament is sitting but as an administrative process, which happens now in relation to various parliamentary papers and legislative instruments. That frees up some time in the House of Representatives, but it also allows for that delegation report, if the delegation members so wish, to be referred to the Main Committee, where other members will have an opportunity to discuss that

delegation report. So this sessional order allows, as I said, for the delegation report to be referred to the Main Committee, with the delegation members still having five minutes each to discuss that report.

The third recommendation I would like to deal with is on the maintenance of order in the Main Committee. The previous position in this place was that if a member was disorderly in the Main Committee—

Mr Price—Theoretically!

Ms HOARE—Theoretically, if that were to happen—which is highly unlikely and has not happened on very many occasions—the only option available to the Deputy Speaker is to suspend the proceedings of the Main Committee and report the disorderly conduct to the House of Representatives. This particular instance usually results in the member being named in the House of Representatives and therefore being suspended from duty in the House of Representatives. The sessional order that has been in place for most of this year allows for the Deputy Speaker in the Main Committee to suspend a member who may be being disorderly—hypothetically—for 15 minutes without disrupting the proceedings of the Main Committee and so allowing the debate to proceed. This report recommends that that sessional order now becomes a standing order.

The fourth issue I would like to deal with is members' three-minute statements in the Main Committee. Three-minute statements, as members know, occurred in the Main Committee between 9.30 and 10 am on Wednesdays and Thursdays when parliament is sitting. If there were going to be some disruption to the House of Representatives, that is the time it would usually happen. That means that members' three-minute statements could be interrupted but were still concluded at 10 am, which means that people who have their names on a list to speak about important issues in their electorates were denied that opportunity. The sessional order that is in place allows for the continuation of members' statements for a period of half an hour, notwithstanding the fact that that may be interrupted. But the full time allotted is still half an hour. This report recommends that sessional order 193 relating to members' three-minute statements be made a standing order.

Finally, I will refer to the speaking times for dissent motions. At the moment there is no time limit for dissent motions. The mover has 20 minutes and other members have 15 minutes until closure. This sessional order allows for 10 minutes for the mover and the second speaker, five minutes for other speakers and a time limit of half an hour. The committee looked at closure motions because of the serious nature of dissent motions; however, we have agreed not to recommend at this stage exempting dissent motions from closure motions. The committee does propose to keep the matter under review and will revisit it at another time. Another main recommendation of this report was the anticipation rule. (*Time expired*)

Mrs BRONWYN BISHOP (Mackellar) (4.11 pm)—In speaking to the report of the Standing Committee on Procedure on sessional orders—both seeing sessional orders that have been in existence become permanent standing orders and seeing a review of current sessional orders—I want to speak more broadly about the role of the Procedure Committee. Members of the Procedure Committee who have already spoken have outlined the sorts of changes that the committee has recommended, but I would like to begin by commending the work done by the chair, Margaret May, and by the other members of the committee who take the work of monitoring the procedures of both the House and the Main Committee very seriously and see it as an integral and important aspect of ensuring that the business of the House is progressed more and more in a timely way and affords ordinary members more opportunity to speak and to represent their constituencies. I think it is fair to say that without the invention, if you like, of this second chamber there is no way in the world that this parliament could dispose of its work in the main chamber. We would have to sit many more days in order to achieve the same amount of work if we had not worked out a way for this second chamber to come into existence.

It still remains very confusing to many people and it was only this morning that I had cause to explain to a number of folk when we were discussing booking the main committee room that that is not this room—it is the room on the first floor with the tiers of seating and the large mural—and that this room is the designated chamber where we conduct business of the House using the method of sitting as the committee of the whole of the parliament. Therefore when we are dealing with detailed sections of a bill we no longer resolve ourselves into a committee of the whole for the purposes of debating each clause of a bill. We now leave the speaker in the chair and discuss the bill in detail, thereby reserving this committee-of-the-whole structure to enable us to conduct a lot more business.

We have developed that slowly but surely so that now, although we take no vote in this chamber, we are able, as the previous speaker, the member for Charlton, pointed out, to take disciplinary action, if you like, if there is disorderly conduct in this particular place, which I hope will soon be referred to as the federation chamber so that people know exactly where we are and what we are doing. We have developed the very useful practice whereby committee reports being tabled in the main chamber are now referred here virtually immediately so that the debate is concurrent with the introduction and tabling of the report. Delegation reports, which were regarded very often

by people as a nuisance, now have a place to be properly debated. So gradually this place is becoming not only a functioning chamber, that allows us not to have to sit extra days away from our constituencies and to progress work, but also an innovative chamber.

It is in here that any member across the way from me could, if they wished, stand up and ask me a question about what I am saying now or in any other debate that we were having. It would be within my rights to deny answer to that question if I did not want to take it, but equally it is adding to the interaction of the debate across the chamber which we, as a committee, have felt has been sadly lacking. We would very much like to see the introduction in the chamber itself of the practice where, in a second reading debate, five minutes of a 20-minute speech would be forgone and the last five minutes would be available for people to ask questions of the speaker about what they have said.

Coming as I did originally from the Senate, I found it quite surprising when I came into this House that there was no standing order that prevented people reading speeches. It is not permitted in the Senate but it is permitted in the House. I personally find that a disincentive to seeing a better debating structure and people engaging with each other and having rebuttal, even in a second reading debate, which I feel could occur if the standing orders were different. However, I know that that would be quite a radical step for many.

In rising to speak to this report and to endorse the comments made by other members of the committee outlining the work that has been done and recommending which sessional orders should remain—whether the existing sessional orders that we presently have in force should remain as permanent standing orders—I really wanted to highlight the fact that we have been quite innovative in developing these new methods of procedures. It is an enormous compliment to this parliament that the British parliament has followed us in the establishment of a second chamber. This is the second time to my knowledge that that has occurred. I remember leading a delegation to London in 1999 dealing with delegated legislation, and the scrutiny of bills practice that we had built up in this parliament was subsequently adopted by the British parliament. So although we have inherited the Westminster system and our parliamentary procedures are based on that, we have taken it, via the Procedure Committee, along a track that has made us far more innovative and worthy of copying by our more established Westminster predecessor. I think that the chair and members of this committee can feel very proud of the work that they continue to do in monitoring the workings of the parliament and finding ways in which we can be innovative in developing a better interaction in debate and a more workable set of standing orders that meet the needs of the day and have prevented us having to sit more days by carrying out so much of our work now in this second chamber.

Mr PRICE (Chifley) (4.19 pm)—Firstly, this report seeks to entrench, by amending standing orders, a number of sessional orders that have been adopted by the House. In particular, as previous members have spoken about, the most significant reform is to have reports which were tabled in the House referred to the Main Committee on the same day. I suppose that the Standing Committee on Procedure considered a number of proposals. I must confess to being favourably disposed towards having committee reports introduced into the Main Committee, but I am not trying to quibble. I think it has been a significant reform that reports are tabled in the House on a Monday, with one speaker a side for five minutes. It is a tyranny; nevertheless, it can be followed up by a 10-minute debate in the Main Committee by not only those committee members who did not get to speak in the House but also anyone else who is interested in the debate. I note that the Manager of Opposition Business is here and will be contributing to this debate, and I welcome her contribution.

I must also confess that, when the committee considered the so-called sin-bin rule for the Main Committee, I had reservations. But I am very pleased to note that you, Mr Deputy Speaker, and your peers have yet to enforce the sin-bin rule in the Main Committee. This has been successful because this chamber has a unique characteristic that the honourable member for Mackellar was referring to—the capacity, for example, for members to ask a question. It is a much friendlier chamber and a much more intimate chamber than the House of Representatives and I do not think we would want to sacrifice that.

I commend honourable members who have been in here and particularly the good judgement of the deputy chairs given the new power. That they have not had to resort to it has been a good thing, but it is there should members ever need to be reminded of the power of the deputy speakers presiding in the Main Committee.

The other significant thing the honourable member for Charlton referred to is the preservation of adjournments and three-minute statements. Previously, if there was a division and you were unhappy enough to be on your feet or yet to speak in the three-minute statements or adjournment you lost that opportunity. On the Labor side it really was a great source of inconvenience, if I may put it that way, because we schedule well ahead. I understand that the government may have different arrangements, so they may not have been so immediately impacted. As the honourable member for Charlton pointed out, people like to use the Main Committee to talk about their electorates

and issues in their electorates in those three-minute statements and the adjournment debates. I hope the Leader of the House will adopt the recommendations in this report in a speedy way.

I also acknowledge that, whenever there are extra sittings of the Main Committee, the Chief Government Whip always agrees to the scheduling of half an hour of three-minute statements. I would like to place on record my appreciation to him for agreeing to do that or initiating that. These additional opportunities are always welcomed by members on both sides of the House and I think that that is working very well. Perhaps later on we will need to try to entrench that in a sessional order or a standing order, but I have no complaints about the current arrangements and in fact quite welcome them.

I also want to make some other brief comments. For example, the Selection Committee was today faced with a request for 90 minutes for tabling of reports in the House, and that included one committee report where the government did not seek any time. Had they sought some time, it would have meant they would have needed 100 minutes.

In addition to the sessional order, what is proposed is a provision for delegation reports so that if a delegation so decides they can present their report to the Speaker and that delegation report will be automatically referred to the Main Committee and debated in the Main Committee. Why would we want to do that? Doing that frees up a bit more private members' time and allows more private members' motions. In fact, as the honourable member for Shortland knows, next Monday there will be one motion from the government and one from the opposition, which is a very limited period for honourable members to bring forward issues by way of a motion that are important to them and their constituents. It does not mean that delegation reports cannot be presented in the House as they currently are and referred to the Main Committee.

For example, I suspect that I would be pretty accurate if I suggested that the Speaker, in leading a delegation, would be unhappy to present a report to himself and even more reluctant, for reasons I do not understand—perhaps the Clerk can help us here—to speak in the Main Committee on that report. Therefore, the Speaker, for example, would always have the option of presenting his report to the House, and I am sure that that would suit his convenience. But I urge those who are leaders and deputy leaders of delegations to seriously consider the default option of presenting their reports to the Speaker and utilising more time in the Main Committee. All too often, the leader and deputy leader get five minutes each in the House and then do not take up the option of having the report debated in the Main Committee. If they did it the default way, they would get at least 10 minutes in the Main Committee each, which I think is a much more serious response to a visit and the success otherwise of it and what improvements honourable members should be aware of or need to make. So, as I say, if you were to be a deputy leader of a delegation, I would strongly urge you, Mr Deputy Speaker, to consider the default option. I am sure you will.

There are some tidying up resolutions and recommendations here. I am not going to go through them because they are pretty straightforward. But I would flag one issue and that is the private members' bills. At the moment, the Procedure Committee deals with the explanatory memorandum. But I think there is a deficiency in this place in that honourable members who present a private member's bill get only five minutes and there is never a debate or a vote on it unless the government of the day grants precedence. In my time in this place that has occurred with Ron Edwards, the member for Stirling from Western Australia, with an obscure timing bill—if I may describe it that way—that the government of the day accepted, and the member for Menzies with his euthanasia bill. I think that there are good private members' bills and they should be encouraged to be brought forward. I think that there ought to be a proper debate and that government members ought to have an opportunity to respond properly to them. If people want some sort of brake on voting, maybe they could use the Selection Committee to determine whether or not a vote should proceed on a private member's bill. But that is for the Procedure Committee to give its due weight and consideration to, and I look forward to that. I certainly support the report of the Procedure Committee.

Ms GILLARD (Lalor) (4.29 pm)—It is certainly not my intention after those words from the member for Chifley to experiment with the 'sin bin' rules in the Main Committee and to be the first example of someone excluded, so I will try and behave myself for the period that I am here. The opposition are in support of the recommendations made in the report of the Standing Committee on Procedure on sessional orders and therefore we urge the Leader of the House to attend to them as quickly as possible.

One of the good things about the Procedure Committee is that it has generally, almost without exception, proceeded on a bipartisan basis. I think that that is very good. If we cannot review the rules in a spirit of bipartisanship then what is it that we can get done in this place in a spirit of bipartisanship? I note that that bipartisanship may well be challenged in the coming period when the committee looks at the question of the standing orders for question time—question time tending to be the most troubled and partisan part of the day—but one of the things I

think we need to acknowledge about the image of parliament is that, whilst a lot of good work gets done elsewhere in the parliament, whether or not we like it, the public window into this parliament is almost without exception question time. Most Australians could not summon a vision of this parliament other than a vision of question time, because that is all they see on the news. I think that that is a substantial challenge for the Procedure Committee coming up and I trust that that review will proceed expeditiously and also in a bipartisan fashion.

I note that the Procedure Committee has made it its business to go through the standing orders and seek to review them for the use of archaic terms. I think we are now at the stage where, having done that, some of them need to be reviewed for meaning and for ongoing applicability. I know that that is the sort of challenge that the Procedure Committee does set itself, and there is more work to do on the standing orders.

In terms of the specific recommendations in the report, I draw attention to the speaking times for dissent motions. As someone who is from time to time called upon to speak to a dissent motion, I think the reduced speaking times are an effective change. At the end of the day, while it is a very serious thing in the House of Representatives for a member of parliament to seek to dissent from a Speaker's ruling, the argument you are making is a procedural argument and it ought to be capable of being fully explained fairly expeditiously. Given that a dissent motion takes precedence necessarily over any other thing that may be happening in the House, it does serve the convenience of the House to deal with that motion as quickly as possible.

I note that, in the report, the Procedure Committee has left for further musing, if I can put it that way, the question of whether or not it is appropriate for closure motions to be applied to a dissent motion that is in progress. I urge the Procedure Committee to further consider that issue. As an opposition—and this has been true of oppositions irrespective of which side of politics has been in opposition—we have made only very limited use of dissent motions. It is not a routine event in the House of Representatives. It is something done only when we feel that the procedures have been so impugned that the matter has to be dealt with. I think it would be grossly unfair to suggest that it has been used as a tactical weapon by the opposition, and I think an examination of the *Hansard* records would bear that out. Given that, I think it is inappropriate for a member who seeks to move a motion of dissent from a Speaker's ruling not to have the full ability to state his or her case and not to have the matter fully debated. Particularly given that the debate is now an expeditious debate delaying the House for only some 30 minutes, it seems to me that it is appropriate to make sure that speakers in such a debate get the opportunity to fully use their time.

I understand that a government with a full legislative program may become concerned if the standing orders are amended so that dissent motions always get a full debate. They may become concerned if there is evidence that that is then being used in a tactical way for no other purpose than delaying the House for 30 minutes. Should that become a norm in the House of Representatives then obviously I would understand that the Procedure Committee would need to revisit it. But I do not think that there is any reasonable reason to fear that that would become a norm. No behaviour in relation to dissent motions is being exhibited at the moment that would suggest it would become a norm.

This report makes a series of very good recommendations which increase the ability of members of this parliament to truly participate in their capacity as parliamentarians. One of the unpleasant things about the way in which our system is viewed is that there is an undercurrent that if you are not serving as a member of the executive then somehow you are not fully playing a role in this place. That is an analysis that I have always rejected. I think there is a very honourable and needed role to be played by people who come into this place and aspire to be great parliamentarians. I think that this report does increase the opportunities to do that. By facilitating further and better debate on committee reports, that is achieved. It enables people to better play their roles as parliamentarians.

One of the regrets felt by people who have served on committees is that committee work represents probably the nicest face of the parliament. Some of the most vexed issues in our society truly get inquired into in a bipartisan way, often with a lot of good work done in the process by committee members, who work extraordinarily hard to not only get through the documents but also do the necessary travel to hear views across the country. Often we have not paid sufficient regard to that work by allowing the full debate of committee reports, and I am glad that this report helps in that regard. I am also glad that it helps to protect members' statements in the Main Committee. Of course, the job of all of us here, whether one is a member of the executive or not, at the end of the day is to represent a local constituency. In that regard it is important that people have fair access to parliamentary opportunities to raise issues affecting their local constituency. Some of those issues can be time-critical—things that people want to get on the record of the parliament at a fixed time—and, consequently, it is to be regretted when people lose their opportunity in the Main Committee because of matters in the House. I think the protection of those opportunities is a very good recommendation.

I would certainly support what the member for Chifley said about private members' bills, and further work being done to ensure that private members' bills can be the subject of genuine debate in the parliament—and particularly in this place, in the Main Committee. As people who have drawn up private members' bills would know, and I am certainly in that category, they take a lot of work. It is not an easy challenge to set yourself, as a member of parliament, to draft a bill. Members therefore only do it if they feel very strongly about the issues. There are some social issues in particular that I think are probably best brought to the parliament by way of a private member's bill because they raise issues which are most likely to be dealt with by a conscience vote by the political parties. We have seen examples of that this year. Indeed, they are private members' bills that originated in the Senate but obviously the bill on RU486 and the bill that is before us on the appropriate use of stem cells and stem cell research have triggered very substantial debates and have originated as private members' bills. To see a greater capacity for the debate of private members' bills would be very good indeed.

The changes to the anticipation rule are sensible ones. We should acknowledge that it was honoured more in the breach than in the observance, even when it was contained in the standing orders. To recognise that by way of a change to the standing orders is appropriate, and when major issues are before the parliament, whether it be the sale of Telstra or the industrial relations legislation, it is inevitable that such matters will be the subject of inquiry at question time, as well as in parliamentary debates and matters of public importance discussions. I do not think we should exclude any of those opportunities through the use of the anticipation rule.

I conclude where I started—by congratulating the Procedure Committee on its work and indicating my support and that of the opposition for the recommendations contained in the report.

Debate (on motion by **Mrs Gash**) adjourned.

COMMITTEES

Family and Human Services Committee

Report: Government Response

Debate resumed from 30 October, on motion by **Mr McGauran**:

That the House take note of the document.

Ms PLIBERSEK (Sydney) (4.40 pm)—I rise today to speak about the government response to the report on the inquiry of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Family and Human Services into overseas adoption. The Standing Committee on Family and Human Services began its inquiry into overseas adoption in 2004. It received a large number of submissions—274—and took evidence from 100 witnesses in 12 hearings. It reported in November 2005. Amongst its key findings were a number of recommendations. There were 27 recommendations, with bipartisan agreement, including that the Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations should remove the five-year age limit for adoption leave, that the minister should standardise maternity leave so that adoptive parents in the Commonwealth public sector receive the same conditions as birth parents, that the Minister for Family and Community Services should remove the age limit for adopted children's eligibility for maternity payment and that the Minister for Family and Community Services should amend eligibility criteria for maternity immunisation allowance so that adoptive children can receive it for two years after the child's entry to Australia.

I know from the public response at the time from adoptive parent groups that they were thrilled with the report. They thought that the committee did an excellent job and that the bipartisan recommendations made by the committee took up a number of issues that they were concerned with. Many adoptive parents and the groups that lobby on their behalf—where the parents are able to support each other through what is a difficult, long and expensive process—had taken a lot of time that many of them do not have. They are busy with their young families. They had taken their precious time to make detailed submissions for the report and they were very pleased with the response the committee gave them.

It was a shame in that context to see the comments of the member for Lindsay, who said in the *Age* on 14 February in 2006 words to the effect that intercountry adoption encouraged a trade in babies. We know that parents who adopt from overseas consider very carefully the ethical aspect of adopting from overseas. They think very long and hard about not only their own desire for a child but also whether they are doing something that is in the best interests of a child. Because of the international conventions to which Australia is signatory, I think it is arguable that we can be confident that, where children are from countries that are signatories to international conventions, those countries have tried to place those children with families in their own country. In fact, in a number of countries I think the process of trying to place children domestically is so slow that we add to the difficulties of those families and those children, because in many cases they have lived in underresourced institutions for many years before they are able to come to be part of an Australian family.

So those comments about Australian parents contributing to a trade in babies, I think, were incredibly hurtful and offensive to many Australian families, including a mother that I was contacted by, Gail Chamberlain. She contacted me from International Adoptive Families of Queensland, very upset about these comments. She also, in her contact with me, wanted me to push wherever I could for the government to respond positively to the bipartisan recommendations made by this committee in its very good report.

She also wanted an apology from the member for Lindsay, which I am sure she did not get—her emails kept bouncing back unopened. She was joined by a number of other adoptive parents, including Steve Nielsen from the Australian Korean Friendship Group, which obviously, as the title would tell you, provides support for Queensland and Victorian families who are seeking to adopt or have adopted from South Korea. He also wanted an apology from the member for Lindsay, and he said in his contact with me: ‘comments such as those from Ms Kelly do nothing to help us’. Ms Kelly’s ignorance will not address the inconsistencies within the process of inter-country adoption. He too was very concerned that the recommendations of the standing committee’s inquiry on intercountry adoption would never see the light of day and was very supportive of the committee’s bipartisan recommendations.

I spoke at some length to a number of parents who were concerned, as I say, by the member for Lindsay’s comments. Really, the overwhelming message was that people who go through the expense, the heartache and the long and difficult process of adoption do it because they believe they can give a good and loving home to the children that they are adopting because they have got a lot of love to give. They do consider those issues. Would this child be better off in his or her birth country? Would they be better off? After a lot of soul searching, I think these parents come to the conclusion that a loving family home has to be better than an institution.

I was pleased to see that a number of the recommendations were adopted by the government. I have been disappointed that some of the most significant ones so far have been rejected by the government. I hope that we will still see some movement on these. One of the most significant was the age restriction on the maternity payment. Currently the maternity payment is not paid to parents who adopt a child who is aged two or over. This means that many parents are not eligible for the \$4,000 maternity payment because their child is older than two when adopted. You often hear of stories of children who miss out by just a few months: they come to a family aged two years and one month, and they are not eligible for the \$4,000 maternity payment. This is not the fault of the families; it is not the fault of the children. In most cases, the delays are, as I say, because of the very careful checking processes both here in Australia to ensure that families are suitable families and overseas to ensure that there are no birth family members overseas that can look after these children. This is a completely arbitrary cut-off date and it discriminates against parents who take on an older child.

Older children are much harder to place than babies. They often come to Australia with significant difficulties, psychological problems and intellectual and developmental delays because of the fact that they have been raised in institutions frequently with not enough adult contact. The fact that parents are prepared to take on older children with the whole range of difficulties—and incidentally a whole range of additional expenses because they are older children—should never be a cause for those families to be discriminated against.

One couple whom I spoke to, Lorren and Robert, have two children of their own, aged 13 and nearly 11. After having thought for many years about adopting a child, they started the long and expensive process last year. They recently became parents to a new daughter aged four years and five months. They say:

Eligibility for the maternity payment would make a huge difference to us, and ease considerably what we would be able to afford to do once returning home. Most adopted children arrive with nothing to their name. Given the age of our other children, we know we will need to purchase clothes, toys, bedding etc that we no longer have. To assist with language and integration, we will also need to invest in toddler appropriate reading books and activities. As the primary income earner, our income will also reduce in the new year, as I intend to take some time off work and then return to reduced hours. An injection of \$4,000 upon returning home would enable us to concentrate on nurturing our new child, and ease the financial strain that we have acutely felt at many stages through the adoption process.

Another woman who contacted me, Sandi Peterson, is an adoptive mother of an 11-year-old, an eight-year-old and a three-year-old. She says:

I assure that you the cost of a bed, clothing, toys and activities for an older child are generally more expensive than those for an under 2 year old. All children are equally precious regardless of whether they come to our families through birth, through adoption at an age under 2 years of age or through adoption as an older child.

On 30 October this year, Labor announced that we would abolish the age restriction on the maternity payment for adoptive parents. We believe that the adoption of a child, whether born in Australia or overseas, requires courage and determination. It often also requires a great deal of money, as this report details. Adoptive parents can spend up to \$30,000 in adopting a child from China, for instance.

The maternity payment, currently \$4,000, should be available to adoptive parents as they have even higher costs than birth parents when welcoming a new child into their family. Adoption agencies and many parents who gave evidence to this parliamentary committee on the adoption of children called for this reform. They have called for it repeatedly, as I know the member for Mackellar opposite has in the past. We believe that families are right in calling for this change and that indeed it should be made.

We have been distressed by some of the controversial comments made by the member for Lindsay and others about overseas adoption. We believe that adoptive parents do take this very difficult decision with a great deal of forethought and with the very best intentions for their family and for the adoptive child that they are to welcome into their family. We hope that the government will respond to this report positively and pick up the remaining recommendations that they have not agreed to to date and implement those bipartisan recommendations as well.

Mrs BRONWYN BISHOP (Mackellar) (4.52 pm)—In rising to speak to this report of the committee which I chaired, I do so with a great deal of pride in the report and the work that the members of the committee put into it. It was a bipartisan report and it was one that touched the hearts of all of our members in a very significant way.

During the course of taking the evidence, something was disclosed that upset us a good deal: we found that an anti-adoption attitude permeated all the bureaucracies involved in the question of adoption. Our terms of reference were to look at it in the context of overseas adoption, not domestic adoption, but there was obviously a flow between the two. When we made our recommendations, we focused obviously on our terms of reference but we have pointed out at every available opportunity that there needs to be an acceptance that adoption is a legitimate way of forming or adding to a family and that that will be in the interest of a child. But we found that the argument that everything must be done in the interests of the child could very often be distorted so that really and truly the outcome was not in the best interests of the child. We looked at the question of domestic adoptions. Last year there were only 65 domestic adoptions of Australian children and some 402 overseas adoptions, but a really horrendous figure is that there were 93 children in New South Wales alone, known to DOCS, who were killed by their biologically connected families. That is a horrendous statistic. Adoption must be considered a legitimate way of providing good families for Australian children.

But to the report: it is a report that relates to overseas adoptions and the difficulties encountered by parents who wish to form a family and to give a happy family and lasting life to the child that they adopt from a country where there are, in accordance with the Hague convention, standards. The countries from which we adopt may not all have been Hague ratifying countries, but there is evidence that shows these are truly children who need love and care within an Australian family.

We were delighted that, first of all, we brought down the report in the last week of the sittings before last Christmas, before we rose, and that by February the Attorney-General had established an interdepartmental committee to discuss the response to our report. We were delighted that we received the response within a really reasonable time. We think it was timely in that we received the response within about nine months of the government considering it. A press release was put out to say that our report was truly the blueprint for reform in this area.

I think the sorts of things that we recommended and that have been accepted are important to itemise. Firstly, we made 27 recommendations. The government accepted 14 outright, three in part and seven in principle, which left three that were not accepted. Of the ones that were accepted, very important were those relating to the need to renegotiate the federal-state agreement. That is the agreement that acknowledges that state governments have the jurisdiction for conferring of adoption status but that the Commonwealth government has the responsibility for making adopted children citizens. In those two areas there is a need to negotiate how we accomplish the adoption of a child who becomes a citizen. We recommended that the federal government must take a far more hands-on approach—it has been very hands-off—and it must take over the responsibility for the negotiation between Australia and other countries for adoption agreements.

In that context of renegotiation, we wanted certain things to occur. We wanted to be able to see how the expedition of an application could occur. We wanted all children to get a birth certificate. For instance, for a child from China, because the adoption is completed in China, all the child really has when it goes to school is a certificate of abandonment. We did not think that was fair on the family or the child. We noted that the Northern Territory had found a way to get a birth certificate and we did not think it was beyond the wit of man for the other states and territories to do so also.

We also wanted much more consultation between government central agencies and those people who want to be parents. We felt that it would be an important thing for state governments to train non-government organisations to be helpful in the whole process of adoption. We wanted DFAT to develop formal protocols to assist people in their adoption when perhaps the file might be a bit slow in going through the country from which the adoption is to take place. There was plenty of evidence of the assistance that DFAT would give, but we wanted to have

more formalised protocols. We also thought it was very important that there be money provided by the Commonwealth for a peak body, a non-government organisation involved in the area of adoption, to be formed by the federal government and funded by it so that there really is an official support group.

We thought it was very, very important that there be a harmonisation of the criteria that the different states and territories use for assessing potential parents for suitability, and this is from the Australian side, leaving aside the requirements of the country from which the child to be adopted comes. Those countries put their own limitations on the sorts of people that they may permit to be adopting parents. Some countries overseas may say that they will not allow their children to be adopted by single parents, for instance, but there is a need for harmonisation at the Australian level.

We made the point very strongly that we did not want harmonisation to be a uniform code because we suspected that that might result in them all being unified at the lowest common denominator. We were very keen to see, where some states and territories are doing it better than others, that in fact the better standard should prevail and not be dumbed down simply for the sake of uniform standards. Hence we used that term.

It was also enormously pleasing that, for the first time, in my knowledge, we received a response to our report from the New South Wales government, which had given evidence before us, and the ACT government, which had given evidence before us. All the states and territories except Queensland gave evidence before us. Queensland gave us a written submission but refused to allow any officials or ministers to appear before the committee, which we found very disappointing. Queensland was the jurisdiction that had closed down all opportunity for people to apply to become adopting parents.

But something else important happened. Not only did we get an excellent response from the federal government and responses from the New South Wales and ACT governments but also I was invited to attend, on Thursday last week, a meeting here in Canberra of the intercountry adoption central authorities. I took part in that meeting, which was chaired by the Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department but had delegates from all state and territory governments, to discuss how those people who will be charged with the responsibility of implementing our recommendations will implement them and how we as a committee hoped they would be implemented. For me to be able to take part in that discussion with those members of the bureaucracy was heartening indeed. I do not know that it has ever occurred before and I think it was a tremendous breakthrough. That unseen work of the committee system, which in a sense is the essence of parliamentary workings, has not only had a response in the chamber, as it is being discussed now, but also I as chairman was able to take the expressions of the committee as a whole to that meeting on how those recommendations, accepted by government, would be implemented. That was really of tremendous benefit to adopting parents, who are ultimately going to be the beneficiaries of our suggested reforms.

I also would like to make the point that attitudes and cultures come from the top down. In the course of our inquiry we came across people who had newly come into the field—who were coming in with new thinking and new attitudes. That is very encouraging. There are still people working in the field who say that there is no such thing as an anti-adoption culture, that there is nothing wrong with the way they do business and that everything is just fine. I would make the point to those people that, if they would talk to their colleagues who have new thinking and new attitudes—permeating right down to the first encounter that would-be adopting parents have with a central agency—I think it would be very beneficial for all concerned.

Unless there is recognition that there is a problem with an anti-adoption culture, it will never be fixed. Some of it clearly stems from the attitude that came about after the stolen generation report was tabled, but there are lives being put at risk by having a biology-first policy. It is interesting that New South Wales has just got through its parliament legislation which will allow the permanent placement of children without biological-parent consent. That is a real breakthrough because, if you are truly interested in the welfare of the child, the first thing you are going to be interested in is making sure it stays alive.

As I said, in New South Wales, there were 93 deaths last year, and there were deaths in other states as well. Compare that with the fact that there were only 65 adoptions in the entire country domestically but over 400 from overseas—caring parents who want to form a family, which is a legitimate purpose, and do so in the interests of the child. I think a cultural change needs to take place.

The words that we placed on the back of our adoption report came from a young Ethiopian girl of 14 who, with the permission of her adopted father, gave evidence to our committee. She said if she had stayed in Ethiopia as a young woman her life expectancy would be 38, but that here in Australia she had the opportunity to have a wonderful life. To paraphrase her, I think she said that she could be a rock and roll star, she could be a model or she could be a cook: she could be anything she wanted because opportunity was here for her. She brought great joy to

the family who had adopted her. Here was an enormously happy child with the prospect of a long and healthy life in front of her.

We all felt that the report we brought down was the right way for Australia to move. We are delighted with the government's response. We are pleased with having the opportunity of speaking with the bureaucracy about the way in which it can be implemented because, ultimately, the outcome will be for a beautiful family with individuals having opportunities they otherwise would be denied.

Debate (on motion by **Mr McMullan**) adjourned.

**TELECOMMUNICATIONS AMENDMENT (INTEGRATED PUBLIC NUMBER DATABASE)
BILL 2006**

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 19 October, on motion by **Mr McGauran**:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Mr RIPOLL (Oxley) (5.08 pm)—I rise to speak in support of the **Telecommunications Amendment (Integrated Public Number Database) Bill 2006**. This bill makes a number of changes to the way in which the information contained in the integrated public number database is managed. The integrated public number database is the central registry of all Australian telephone numbers and associated information, such things, for example, as a subscriber's name and address in Australia.

The maintenance of the IPND is of central importance to the efficiency and operation of Australia's telecommunications network. The IPND plays an important role in connecting Australians to emergency services. It is also a very valuable tool for law enforcement agencies. Under the current arrangements, the IPND is operated and maintained by Telstra. At present, access to the information in the IPND is permitted in limited circumstances but, given the nature of the information, the permitted uses of this information are heavily restricted, as could be expected. As the IPND is primarily used to enable the operation of multiple telecommunications networks in Australia, it differs from commonly known, publicly available telephone directories in a number of respects. Unlike publicly available telephone directories, like the *White Pages*, the IPND also contains records of all silent numbers as well as the full names of telephone subscribers.

Given the sensitivity of the information contained in the IPND and the potential privacy implications of this data being misused, it is essential that the integrity of the database is protected. Unfortunately in recent times there has been growing evidence that the IPND data has been misused. A specific area of concern in this regard has been the misuse of IPND information by parties claiming to use the data for the creation of public number directories, when in fact unscrupulous operators have been using this information to offer reverse-search-capable directories to facilitate telemarketing and credit management operations. I am sure there are many reputable and credible operators who use the information properly, as it is designed, but of course there are always a few who do the wrong thing.

Other examples of these misuses include the use of the IPND for data matching, identity confirmation, credit checking and debt collection purposes. Given the extreme sensitivity of the information contained in the IPND, the use of the data for these purposes is clearly unacceptable. Labor is committed to protecting the personal privacy of all Australians. Labor has raised the privacy implications of improper access to the information in the IPND with the Australian Communications and Media Authority at Senate estimates on a number of occasions. During these hearings Labor has criticised ACMA for not taking enforcement action to prevent and punish the misuse of IPND data. Despite the issue being raised in Senate estimates and despite recognition of this issue by the predecessor to ACMA, the Australian Communications Authority, in its 2004 paper *Who's got your number?*, before now little has been done to put an end to these unacceptable practices. In this context Labor welcomes the improvements, provided for in this bill, to the way in which access is provided to data contained in the IPND.

The bill improves the integrity of the data in the IPND and it does it in a number of ways. Firstly the bill clarifies the circumstances in which access to the data and the IPND can be granted. The bill does this by allowing the minister to specify by legislative instrument categories of permitted uses for IPND data and the conditions that will govern the use of the IPND data for each of those categories. The bill further closes off the most commonly exploited loophole in the existing regime. That is the acquisition of IPND data for the purposes of maintaining a public number directory and then using the data for other purposes. The bill addresses this issue by defining the term 'public number directory' and specifying the information that can be contained in data entries in order for a compilation to qualify as a public number directory. In this way parties would be permitted to develop public number directories that listed an individual's name, public telephone number and, optionally, their address. However, they would be prohibited from including any other information—for example, silent telephone numbers.

The bill also permits the minister to prescribe additional conditions that a compilation must comply with to be considered to be a public number directory. As a further privacy protection, the bill also removes the responsibility for determining whether to grant access to the IPND data from Telstra and instead requires ACMA to approve applications for access to the IPND data. The bill requires ACMA to establish a framework to judge applications for authorisation to access the IPND data. This framework is to be developed in consultation with the Privacy Commissioner and the Secretary of the Attorney-General's Department, giving Australians additional assurance of the protection of their personal information. On top of this the bill also permits the minister to impose conditions of authorisation that govern the use of IPND data for authorised parties. The House has been told that the minister intends to specify a condition preventing the transfer of IPND data overseas and a further condition requiring the destruction or secure disposal of IPND data upon the termination of the authorisation. Again, the Privacy Commissioner and the Attorney-General will be consulted on these ministerial conditions.

Finally, the bill creates a series of new criminal offences and penalties for unauthorised use of IPND data, failure to comply with conditions governing the use of IPND data and other misuses of this data. These additional protections will of course apply in addition to the continued operation of existing privacy protections such as the Privacy Act and the do not call list.

Taken as a whole, this bill represents a significant improvement in the regulatory framework, protecting the information contained in the IPND, that is welcomed by the Labor Party. In addition to the strengthened privacy protections, the new regime for access to IPND data created by this bill has the benefit of creating the potential for the use of IPND data for research purposes. The IPND is potentially very useful for parties carrying out research into issues like health and education. As long as legitimate privacy concerns associated with the use of IPND data are dealt with, opening access to the IPND for researchers is likely to result in significant public benefits. However, at present, IPND data can only be used by telecommunications carriers for limited purposes and by law enforcement agencies, emergency services and companies producing public number directories.

The bill would create a fifth category that would permit certain types of researchers to obtain access to the IPND. The kind of research that the bill would permit would be limited to non-commercial research for a purpose that is in the public interest. In addition, researchers would not be permitted to obtain access to the private number information contained in the IPND. Given the strengthened privacy protections included in this bill, Labor is confident that the permitted uses of IPND data can be extended to researchers without threatening the integrity of the IPND.

In sum, this bill represents a long overdue strengthening of the regulatory framework surrounding the integrated public number database. For some time there has been a need to improve the rigour and effectiveness of the privacy protections that apply to the data contained in the IPND. Labor has been calling for a more concerted regulatory effort in this area for a number of years and this bill is a good down payment for this goal. While the bill needs to be buttressed by act of regulatory action by ACMA, it is a good start. That has been acknowledged in comments made by others in the past and by me today. For these reasons, Labor supports the Telecommunications Amendment (Integrated Public Number Database) Bill 2006.

I will just make a few other comments. Obviously, the protection of this sort of data is very important to all Australians. I think it is important that this parliament has the right regulatory framework in place. It has been a long time coming, but it is something that we need to do. I am pretty confident that what is contained in this bill will deal with all the issues that I have talked about to do with privacy and protection. But certainly we need to be very careful that, while we aim to protect people's privacy, at the same time we do not prevent legitimate business from using it—the legitimate use of very important information. That information, of course, is mostly public, through either the *White Pages*, the *Yellow Pages* or other directories. As for access to the information, while it is protected, it certainly can be used for business and legitimate purposes. I think we all need to be aware of that.

I think this bill does address those issues, but we need to be very careful and mindful of the way that this bill interacts with them. There may be some cause in the future to look more closely at a number of businesses and companies out there which are doing legitimate work and which may have concerns. There may also have been oversights by the minister's department or the government in putting this bill together originally or things which were not visible at the time in terms of what individual companies and businesses might be doing.

I know from the shadow minister's office that this is something that we will certainly be looking at closely. We will be monitoring it and making sure that we can continue to support small business that would need to use this type of information in a legitimate way. I am acutely aware of the pitfalls the use of this data. Some unscrupulous businesses might go out there and deliberately rot this type of information. It is certainly something that we want to prevent and that the Labor Party would not support. That is why we support this bill in the first place. We think it will address all of those concerns. I thank the Main Committee.

Mrs DE-ANNE KELLY (Dawson—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Transport and Regional Services) (5.19 pm)—I would like to thank members for their contributions to the debate on the **Telecommunications Amendment (Integrated Public Number Database) Bill 2006**. I am pleased to note the broad support for the bill, and I acknowledge the support of the opposition in this matter and thank them for that. The privacy and protection of people's personal information has become a key issue of concern to the Australian community. Today the government moves to take action against the unauthorised use of personal information which is provided by customers when they sign up for a telecommunications service and recorded in the integrated public number database, IPND. The IPND is a complete and always up-to-date electronic database of all residential and business telephone numbers and address details. Through this bill, the government tightens access to this personal information for the purpose of producing a public number directory. The bill introduces a definition of public number directory into the act in order to prevent personal information held in the IPND being directly used for unauthorised purposes.

The bill also gives the Australian Communications and Media Authority, ACMA, a key gatekeeper role in deciding applications for access to IPND information by public number directory producers and researchers. Currently the IPND gatekeeper is Telstra. Existing and prospective IPND data users will be required to apply to ACMA for an authorisation to access the IPND. Telstra will only be permitted to disclose IPND data to persons holding such an authorisation.

These measures will make it very difficult to access IPND data for unauthorised purposes, something that has occurred in the past. As well as clarifying IPND access arrangements for public directory producers, the bill allows for limited access to IPND information for some specified social research purposes that are clearly in the public interest. But, importantly, the bill does not permit unlisted customer information, including silent number information, to be published in telephone directories or to be used to conduct research. The bill requires ACMA to establish a scheme for the granting of authorisations permitting persons to use and disclose IPND information. The bill requires ACMA to consult with the Privacy Commissioner and the Attorney-General's Department on development of the scheme. Criminal sanctions will apply for unauthorised secondary disclosure and use of IPND data and for breaches of conditions of authorisations issued under the IPND scheme.

The government's strategy in developing legislation has always been to ensure that we have listened to the views of industry and the community. ACMA has undertaken exhaustive consultation on the issues addressed by this bill, which is a robust and effective response to the problem at hand. I again thank members for their support of the Telecommunications Amendment (Integrated Public Number Database) Bill 2006.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Ordered that the bill be reported to the House without amendment.

Main Committee adjourned at 5.24 pm

QUESTIONS IN WRITING

Media Monitoring and Clipping Services

(Question No. 1779)

Mr Bowen asked the Minister for Human Services, in writing, on 23 June 2005:

- (1) What sum was spent on media monitoring and clipping services engaged by the Minister's office in 2004-2005 to date.
- (2) What was the name and postal addresses of each media monitoring company engaged by the Minister's office.

Mr Hockey—The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

- (1) In 2004-2005, the Minister's office spent \$7,364.00 on media monitoring and clipping services provided by Media Monitors, and \$1490.50 on media monitoring and clipping services provided by AAP.
- (2) The name and address of both media monitoring companies are:

Media Monitors
PO Box 2110
Strawberry Hills
NSW 2012
AAP
Locked Bag 21
Grosvenor Place
NSW 1220

To prepare this answer it has taken approximately 1 hour and 30 minutes at an estimated cost of \$95.

Human Services: Staffing

(Question No. 1783)

Mr Bowen asked the Minister for Human Services, in writing, on 23 June 2005:

- (1) How many persons were employed by the Minister's department in 2004-2005.
- (2) What was the rate of staff turnover in the Minister's department in 2004-2005.

Mr Hockey—The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

Core Department

- (1) Please refer to page 228 of the 2004-2005 Department of Human Services Annual Report.
- (2) Of the permanent staff, the turnover was less than 1%.

Child Support Agency

- (1) Please refer to pages 229-230 of the 2004-2005 Department of Human Services Annual Report.
- (2) The Child Support Agency has had 422 separations in the period 1 July 2004 to 30 June 2005. The average staff head-count for this period is 3179.92. This figure does not include non-payroll contractors. Therefore, the turnover for 1 July 2004 to 30 June 2005 is 13.27%.

CRS Australia

- (1) Please refer to pages 231-232 of the 2004-2005 Department of Human Services Annual Report.
- (2) The average staff turnover for CRS Australia for the period 26 October 2004 to 23 June 2005 was 11.795 per cent.

To prepare this answer it has taken approximately 5 hours and 11 minutes at an estimated cost of \$288.

Advertising Agencies

(Question No. 1802)

Mr Bowen asked the Minister for Human Services, in writing, on 23 June 2005:

- (1) Will the Minister provide a list of advertising agencies which are used by the department and the agencies in the Minister's portfolio.
- (2) What sum was paid to each advertising agency used by the department and agencies in the Minister's portfolio in (a) 2003-2004 and (b) 2004-2005.

Mr Hockey—The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

The Department of Human Services was established on 26 October 2004.

Core Department

No advertising agencies were used in the period between 26 October 2004 and 30 June 2005.

Australian Hearing

- (1) Clemenger Harvie Edge
 (2) \$481,727.07

Centrelink

No advertising agencies were used in the period between 26 October 2004 and 30 June 2005.

Child Support Agency

No advertising agencies were used in the period between 26 October 2004 and 30 June 2005.

CRS Australia

- (1) The School of Thought
 (2) \$5,434.00

Medicare Australia

No advertising agencies were used in the period between 26 October 2004 and 30 June 2005.

Health Services Australia

No advertising agencies were used in the period between 26 October 2004 and 30 June 2005.

To prepare this answer it has taken 11 hours and 57 minutes at an estimated cost of \$461.

Centrelink Overpayments**(Question No. 2400)**

Ms Grierson asked the Minister for Human Services, in writing, on 10 October 2005:

- (1) For the year (a) 2003-2004 and (b) 2004-2005, how many individuals (i) in total and in the postcode area (ii) 2287, (iii) 2289, (iv) 2291, (v) 2292, (vi) 2293, (vii) 2294, (viii) 2295, (ix) 2296, (x) 2297, (xi) 2298, (xii) 2299, (xiii) 2300, (xiv) 2302, (xv) 2303, (xvi) 2304, (xvii) 2305, (xviii) 2307, (xix) 2308, and (xx) 2309 received a debt notification in relation to the overpayment of a Centrelink-administered benefit.
- (2) What was the total debt for each category of benefit.

Mr Hockey—The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

- (1) (a) and (b) In 2003–04 and 2004–05 the following numbers of individuals received debt notifications in relation to the overpayment of a Centrelink administered benefit:

Postcode	2003–04	2004–05
2287	2,789	2,335
2289	1,380	1,129
2291	846	736
2292	225	196
2293	254	269
2294	208	221
2295	407	344
2296	163	163
2297	190	172
2298	854	697
2299	924	811
2300	753	683
2302	25	26
2303	840	732
2304	1,583	1,390
2305	907	757
2307	324	291
2308	<20	<20
Other Post-codes	1,687,951	1,393,910
TOTAL	1,700,627	1,404,872

Note: All cells that have a value of less than 20, other than 0 have been changed to display "< 20". This rule has been agreed for privacy reasons. Where total fields are included these will only have a value when it does not make it possible to work out the value of any "<20" fields.

The total debt for each category of benefit in the postcodes nominated was:

	2003-04	2004-05
	\$	\$
Age Pension	462,631.11	542,307.58
Age Pension Related Payments	7,379.12	4,778.15
Disability Support & Sickness Allowance	989,712.72	931,270.77
Disability & Sickness Related Payments	167,975.12	122,497.99
Newstart Allowance	2,443,126.28	2,369,967.99
Newstart Related Payments	135,017.59	99,045.35
Youth Jobseeker	339,234.24	308,765.35
Youth Student, Apprentice & Austudy	1,293,393.89	1,214,578.19
Abstudy	92,658.44	130,914.66
Assistance To Isolated Children	322.51	3,069.83
Youth & Student Related Payments	80,653.46	44,770.74
Family Tax Benefit	5,741,438.43	5,234,286.91
Childcare Assistance	282,843.39	346,625.36
Family Related Payments	14,451.09	9,679.47
Parenting Payment	1,272,181.94	1,017,563.19
Parenting Related Payments	42,788.66	2,739.67
Special Circumstance	60,259.95	46,867.28
Total	13,426,067.94	12,429,728.48

Note: Data for both tables extracted on 2/12/05

To prepare this answer it has taken approximately 6 hours and 20 minutes at an estimated cost of \$334.

Consultancy Services

(Question No. 2548)

Mr Brendan O'Connor asked the Minister for Human Services, in writing, on 31 October 2005:

Did Centrelink engage the services of Hugh Watson Consulting Pty Ltd at a cost of \$63,134.60 to undertake a functional review of its communications division; if so, (a) what will be the specific focus of the review, (b) why was it considered necessary, and (c) will the findings of the review be made public.

Mr Hockey—The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

- (a) Yes, to align functions with Divisional accountabilities and to develop accountability statements for all staff.
- (b) The review is necessary as the Communication Division's responsibilities have changed.
- (c) No.

To prepare this answer it has taken 1 hour and 59 minutes at an estimated cost of \$97.

Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry: Grants

(Question No. 2594)

Mr Martin Ferguson asked the Minister for Human Services, in writing, on 8 November 2005:

For each of the last nine financial years, what sum has been granted by the department and each agency in the Minister's portfolio to the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry or its predecessor.

Mr Hockey—The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

The Department of Human Services was established on 26 October 2004. In the period 26 October 2004 to 30 June 2005, no sum has been granted by the department or any Human Services agency to the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry or its predecessor.

To prepare this answer it has taken 4 hours and 52 minutes at an estimated cost of \$285.

Human Services: Small Business Payments

(Question No. 2673)

Mr Bowen asked the Minister for Human Services, in writing, on 28 November 2005:

For 2004-2005, (a) how many and (b) what proportion of payments made by the Minister's department to small business were not made within (i) 30 and (ii) 60 days of receipt of the goods or services and a proper invoice in accordance with Government procurement policy.

Mr Hockey—The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

The Department of Human Services was established on 26 October 2004.

Core Department

For the period 26 October 2004 to 30 June 2005, a total of 21 payments (8.57%) were not made within 30 days with all payments made within 60 days of receipt of the goods or services for the Core Department.

Child Support Agency

For the period 26 October 2004 to 30 June 2005, a total of 10 payments (0.007%) were not made within 30 days and a total of 8 payments (0.006%) were not made within 60 days of receipt of the goods or services for the Child Support Agency.

CRS Australia

For the period 26 October 2004 to 30 June 2005, a total of 41 payments (0.15%) were not made within 30 days and a total of 27 payments (0.1%) were not made within 60 days of receipt of the goods or services for CRS Australia.

To prepare this answer it has taken approximately 20 hours and 10 minutes at an estimated cost of \$1,022.

Legal Services**(Question No. 2708)**

Ms Roxon asked the Minister for Human Services, in writing, on 28 November 2005:

- (1) What sum did the Minister's department spend during 2004-2005 on external (a) barristers and (b) solicitors (including private firms, the Australian Government Solicitor and any others).
- (2) What sum did the Minister's department spend on internal legal services.
- (3) What is the Minister's department's projected expenditure on legal services for 2005-2006.

Mr Hockey—The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

The Department of Human Services comprises the Core Department, the Child Support Agency and CRS Australia.

- (1) During the 2004-2005 financial year:
 - (a) the Child Support Agency spent \$139,111.89 (including GST) on external barristers (the Core Department and CRS Australia did not spend any money on external barristers), and
 - (b) the Core Department spent \$177,279.30 (including GST), the Child Support Agency spent \$2,607,781.24 (including GST) and CRS Australia spent \$239,756 (including GST) on external solicitors including the Australian Government Solicitor and the Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions.
- (2) During the 2004-2005 financial year, the Core Department estimates it spent \$127,000 on internal legal services, the Child Support Agency spent \$1,645,472.03 on internal legal services. CRS Australia did not spend any money on internal legal services.
- (3) The budgeted amount for outsourced legal services in 2005-2006 for the Core Department was \$300,000, the Child Support Agency \$2,810,047.41 and CRS Australia \$245,000.

To prepare this answer it has taken approximately 39 hours and 26 minutes at an estimated cost of \$2003.

Education, Science and Training: Staffing**(Question No. 2734)**

Ms Macklin asked the Minister for Education, Science and Training, in writing, on 29 November 2005:

- (1) For the department and each agency in the Minister's portfolio, what was the total staffing level in (a) 2001, (b) 2002, (c) 2003, (d) 2004, and (e) 2005.
- (2) For the department and each agency in the Minister's portfolio for (a) 2001, (b) 2002, (c) 2003, (d) 2004, and (e) 2005 how many New Apprentices (i) had commenced and (ii) were employed.
- (3) How many of the New Apprenticeships referred to in part (2) were traditional apprenticeships (as defined by the National Centre for Vocational Education Research as an apprenticeship in an occupation in Australian Standard Classification of Occupations Group 4—Tradespersons and Related Workers—at AQF level 3 or above with an expected duration of more than 2 years full time).
- (4) How many traditional apprenticeships does the department and each agency in the Minister's portfolio intend to offer to commence in 2006.

Ms Julie Bishop—The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

- (1) Staffing figures are published in the Annual Reports of the Department and each agency for each year.
- (2) The number of New Apprentices who (i) had commenced and (ii) were employed is as follows:

Department / Agency	2001		2002		2003		2004		2005	
	(i)	(ii)	(i)	(ii)	(i)	(ii)	(i)	(ii)	(i)	(ii)
DEST/Questacon	8	8	5	5*	8	8	8	8	5	5
IAASTIS	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
AIMS	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
ANSTO	0	0	4	4	4	8	3	11	0	11
ANTA	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
CSIRO	7	21	2	18	4	16	4	13	1	10

*Questacon had one apprentice under ASCO Group 4 in its workshop. However, the person was employed through Regional Group Training (RGT) and was on a work placement and not employed by Questacon.

The Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) transferred its functions to DEST on 1 July 2005. The required information is not available to enable a response on behalf of ANTA.

DEST's responsibilities do not require the skills of typical trade/industry types of apprentices. DEST's capability requirements are predominantly found in Graduates and there are limited opportunities available for the type of work undertaken at the level of office-based New Apprentices. However, New Apprentices do form one part of the entry level recruitment initiatives (along with Cadets and Graduates) which occur as part of the agency's overall recruitment strategy. The Department conducts a full campaign each year to recruit apprentices, actively encouraging applications from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and people with a disability.

- (3) The number of New Apprenticeships which were traditional apprenticeships is 89.
- (4) Final numbers will only be known at the end of 2006.

Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs: Staffing
(Question No. 2735)

Ms Macklin asked the Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, in writing, on 29 November 2005:

- (1) For the department and each agency in the Minister's portfolio, what was the total staffing level in (a) 2001, (b) 2002, (c) 2003, (d) 2004, and (e) 2005.
- (2) For the department and each agency in the Minister's portfolio for (a) 2001, (b) 2002, (c) 2003, (d) 2004, and (e) 2005 how many New Apprentices (i) had commenced and (ii) were employed.
- (3) How many of the New Apprenticeships referred to in part (2) were traditional apprenticeships (as defined by the National Centre for Vocational Education Research as an apprenticeship in an occupation in Australian Standard Classification of Occupations Group 4—Tradespersons and Related Workers—at AQF level 3 or above with an expected duration of more than 2 years full time).
- (4) How many traditional apprenticeships does the department and each agency in the Minister's portfolio intend to offer to commence in 2006.

Mr Brough—The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

For total staffing levels at 30 June each year, please refer to the Annual Reports for the Department of Family and Community Services, Aboriginal Hostels Limited, the Australian Institute of Family Studies and the Social Security Appeals Tribunal.

The Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaCSIA) is a policy rather than line delivery agency, so its staff needs for traditional trades people is limited. However, over the period some 30 people were engaged in New Apprenticeships relevant to FaCSIA portfolio duties. Of those some 22 subsequently went on to employment in ongoing positions.

Centrelink: Staffing
(Question No. 2781)

Ms Hoare asked the Minister for Human Services, in writing, on 5 December 2005:

- (1) How many persons are currently employed in total, and at each classification level, at the (a) Charlestown, (b) Toronto, and (c) Wallsend Centrelink office.
- (2) How many people were employed in total, and at each classification level, at the (a) Charlestown, (b) Toronto, and (c) Wallsend Centrelink office at 1 July (i) 2003, (ii) 2004, and (iii) 2005.
- (3) How many people currently employed the (a) Charlestown, (b) Toronto, and (c) Wallsend Centrelink office were employed at that office on 1 July 2004.
- (4) How many clients accessed services at the (a) Charlestown, (b) Toronto, and (c) Wallsend Centrelink office in (i) 2002-2003, (ii) 2003-2004, and (iii) 2004-2005 and what proportion of clients accessed which particular services.

Mr Hockey—The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

- (1) and (2)

Centrelink Employees - Charlestown, Toronto and Wallsend Customer Service Centres

		Charlestown	Toronto	Wallsend
1-July-03	Centrelink Band 2 (APS 3/4)	57	27	36
	Centrelink Band 3 (APS 5/6)	9	5	5
	Centrelink Band 4 (APS EL1/2)	1	0	1
	Total	67	32	42
1-July-04*	Centrelink Band 2 (APS 3/4)	40	16	25
	Centrelink Band 3 (APS 5/6)	5	1	4
	Centrelink Band 4 (APS EL1/2)	1	1	1
	Total	46	18	30

		Charlestown	Toronto	Wallsend
1-July-05	Centrelink Band 2 (APS 3/4)	43	15	30
	Centrelink Band 3 (APS 5/6)	5	1	3
	Centrelink Band 4 (APS EL1/2)	1	1	2
	Total	49	17	35
31-Oct-05	Centrelink Band 2 (APS 3/4)	41	19	28
	Centrelink Band 3 (APS 5/6)	5	1	3
	Centrelink Band 4 (APS EL1/2)	1	1	1
	Total	47	21	32

*The drop in staffing numbers in July 2004 is attributable to the implementation of the Australians Working Together program. A number of non-ongoing positions were created for a defined contract between March and July 2003 to relieve permanent staff during the training phase of the implementation. In 2003-04 the Area also consolidated a number of functions that had previously been performed in Customer Service Centres.

- (3) (a) A total of 39 staff currently employed at the Charlestown Centrelink Office were employed at the Charlestown Centrelink Office on 1 July 2004.
- (b) A total of 12 staff currently employed at the Toronto Centrelink Office were employed at the Toronto Centrelink Office on 1 July 2004.
- (c) A total of 28 staff currently employed at the Wallsend Centrelink Office were employed at the Wallsend Centrelink Office on 1 July 2004.
- (4) There is currently no data available to identify the precise number of customers who access services at the Charlestown, Toronto and Wallsend Customer Service Centres. The following information provides customer populations by payment type for the Charlestown, Toronto and Wallsend Customer Service Centres. It should be noted that some customers may be in receipt of more than one payment type and therefore may be included in the figures for more than one payment.

Customer Populations as at June 2003

	Charlestown	Toronto	Wallsend
Carer Allowance*	2,231	1,044	1,676
FTB(A) eligible	10,421	4,780	7,578
FTB(B) eligible	6,899	3,326	4,916
Newstart Allowance	3,241	1,498	2,071
NSS Mature Age Allowance	399	157	169
Partner Allowance	1,008	375	513
Widow Allowance	228	70	118
Austudy Payment	205	100	144
Except. Circ. Relief Payment	0	0	0
Farm Family Restart	<20	0	0
Youth Allowance	2,391	1,065	1,919
Age pension	14,377	6,487	8,715
Bereavement allowance	<20	0	0
Carer payment	582	311	468
Disability support pension	4,766	2,637	3,364
Wife pension (Age)	120	57	79
Wife pension (DSP)	277	139	209
Widow pension class B	<20	<20	<20
Double Orphans Pensions	<20	<20	<20
Mobility Allowance	228	127	144
Parenting Payment Partnered	817	474	659
Parenting Payment Single	2,702	1,462	1,885
Sickness Allowance	36	20	27
Special Benefit	<20	<20	<20

* denotes @ July 2003

Note: In this and the following tables, all cells that have a value of less than 20, other than zero, have been changed to display '<20'. This rule has been employed for privacy reasons.

Customer Populations as at June 2004

	Charlestown	Toronto	Wallsend
Carer Allowance**	2,175	1,055	1,687
FTB(A) eligible	10,575	4,796	7,723
FTB(B) eligible	6,889	3,270	4,977
Newstart Allowance	2,992	1,388	1,934
NSS Mature Age Allowance	332	146	134

	Charlestown	Toronto	Wallsend
Partner Allowance	924	334	491
Widow Allowance	240	72	128
Austudy Payment	178	84	130
Except. Circ. Relief Payment	0	0	0
Farm Family Restart	0	0	0
Youth Allowance	2,255	998	1,829
Age pension	14,523	6,550	8,617
Bereavement allowance	<20	<20	0
Carer payment	598	328	527
Disability support pension	4,904	2,703	3,509
Wife pension (Age)	113	52	79
Wife pension (DSP)	225	117	183
Widow pension class B	<20	<20	<20
Double Orphans Pensions	<20	<20	<20
Mobility Allowance	206	124	134
Parenting Payment Partnered	515	302	404
Parenting Payment Single	2,729	1,420	1,895
Sickness Allowance	37	<20	33
Special Benefit	<20	<20	<20

** denotes @ July 2004

Customer Populations as at June 2005

	Charlestown	Toronto	Wallsend
Carer Allowance	2,395	1,234	1,813
FTB(A) eligible	10,384	4,752	7,772
FTB(B) eligible	7,767	3,704	5,801
Newstart Allowance	2,694	1,320	1,864
NSS Mature Age Allowance	224	100	88
Partner Allowance	715	281	404
Widow Allowance	241	86	122
Austudy Payment	169	86	108
Except. Circ. Relief Payment	0	0	0
Farm Family Restart	0	0	0
Youth Allowance	2,117	992	1,747
Age pension	14,672	6,688	8,664
Bereavement allowance	<20	0	0
Carer payment	622	342	535
Disability support pension	4,728	2,573	3,394
Wife pension (Age)	95	43	71
Wife pension (DSP)	175	94	155
Widow pension class B	0	0	0
Double Orphan Pension	<20	<20	<20
Mobility Allowance	158	94	127
Parenting Payment Partnered	664	427	553
Parenting Payment Single	2,423	1,337	1,783
Sickness Allowance	35	22	33
Special Benefit	<20	<20	<20

To prepare this answer it has taken approximately 8 hours and 20 minutes at an estimated cost of \$433.

Electronic Delivery of Services

(Question No. 2795)

Mr Kelvin Thomson asked the Minister for Human Services, in writing, on 7 December 2005:

- (1) What face-to-face or paper-based services are to be replaced by the online or electronic delivery of services in his department and in each of the agencies for which he is responsible.
- (2) In respect of each service affected, when will the change be implemented.
- (3) What will be the effect on staff levels as a result of the change to online and electronic delivery of services.

Mr Hockey—The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

Centrelink, Medicare Australia and the Child Support Agency all have initiatives in place to offer services online.

Currently, services offered online are also available through other channels, such as phone, mail or in-person, allowing citizens to choose how they wish to interact with Human Services agencies.

There are currently no initiatives underway to stop existing face-to-face or paper-based services and offer them exclusively online. As such, there is no direct and significant impact on current staffing.

However, the Department of Human Services and its agencies are working to increase the take-up of online services because they are convenient for many citizens and are an efficient and effective way for government to deliver services.

Initiatives to increase the take-up of online services are based on citizen demand. For example, students may be directed to online services as their "first point of call" in the future because many students prefer to do things online and have ready access to the internet. Other options will continue to be available for those with circumstances that prevent them from accessing services online.

As citizens choose to do more interactions with government online, there may be reduced demand on other channels. Over time, staffing and resources may be used in different ways in order to meet citizen demand.

To prepare this answer it has taken approximately 2 hours and 15 minutes at an estimated cost of \$132.

Recruitment Agencies

(Question No. 3296)

Mr Bowen asked the Minister for Human Services, in writing, on 29 March 2006:

- (1) Will the Minister provide a list of the recruitment agencies which were used by the department and each agency in the Minister's portfolio in 2005.
- (2) What sum was paid to each agency identified in (1).
- (3) For 2005, what sum was spent on recruitment agencies by the department and each agency in the Minister's portfolio.

Mr Hockey—The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

Core Department

The core Department of Human Services did not use any recruitment agencies in 2005.

Child Support Agency

CATALYST RECRUITMENT SYSTEMS LTD	\$6,500
EFFECTIVE PEOPLE PTY LTD	\$913
FLETCHER EXECUTIVE SEARCH	\$28,345
FORSTAFF AUSTRALIA	\$397,135
FRONTIER GROUP AUSTRALIA PTY LTD	\$19,221
GREEN AND GREEN GROUP PTY LTD	\$7,000
HAYS METIER PERSONNEL	\$9,000
HUDSON GLOBAL RESOURCES	\$33,630
IPA PERSONNEL	\$1,296
MANPOWER SERVICES (AUSTRALIA)	\$139,519
RECRUITMENT SOLUTIONS	\$1,500
RECRUITMENT SOLUTIONS LIMITED	\$31,151
REGENT RECRUITMENT	\$6,000
SELECT AUSTRALASIA	\$12,304
SPHERION GROUP LIMITED	\$700
SPHERION RECRUITMENT (SYDNEY)	\$1,875
Grand Total	\$696,089

CRS Australia

Recruitment Agency	Cost
Hays Accountancy Personnel	\$227,322
Greythorn	\$127,947
Careerlink	\$53,689
Select Australasia	\$40,336
M & T Resources - Brisbane	\$25,146
Peoplebank Australia Pty Ltd	\$22,832
Temp-Team Pty Ltd	\$20,828
Forstaff	\$19,837
Public Affairs Recruitment Company	\$17,837
Drake Australia Pty Ltd	\$16,991
Adecco	\$16,058
Kelly Services	\$15,447
Ross Human Directions Limited	\$14,952

Recruitment Agency	Cost
Effective People Pty Ltd	\$14,845
Seek Communications	\$14,576
J&B Personnel P/L t/as Heather Bowen	\$11,176
Julie Warner Consulting Pty Ltd	\$11,112
Hudson Global Resources	\$10,958
Win Personnel Consultants	\$10,945
Wizard Pty Ltd – Melissa Riches	\$9,646
Recruitment Solutions Ltd	\$9,620
Steven Hallis Personnel Services Pty Ltd	\$8,300
GAB Consultants (t/a Gippsland Workabout and Office Extra	\$8,024
Sheelagh McKenzie Recruitment	\$8,003
Chandler Macleod Group	\$7,948
BIGA Recruitment	\$6,704
Coopers Recruitment formerly Bird Enterprises	\$6,653
Value Sourcing	\$6,138
PKL Personnel Pty Ltd	\$4,546
Workforce on Tap	\$4,130
Workplace Services	\$3,750
Bradman Office Support Staff - Boss	\$3,486
Integrity Staffing Pty Ltd	\$3,094
Sue Weekes Personnel	\$3,030
Zelda Recruitment Pty Ltd	\$2,564
Workzone	\$2,296
Your Employment Solutions	\$1,864
Gippsland Business Support	\$1,691
Simpson Personnel	\$1,623
Career Employment Group Inc	\$1,592
Manpower Services (Australia) Pty Ltd	\$1,497
Prestige Staffing Personnel	\$1,372
Gem Personnel	\$1,320
Recruitco Pty Ltd	\$1,000
Resource Options	\$983
Health Education and Recruitment Services	\$921
Recruitment Assessments & Training	\$915
Monarch Personnel	\$708
Marshmans Personnel	\$692
Cbi recruitment SA	\$480
Ready Workforce	\$411
Centre Staffing Pty Ltd	\$336
Recruitnet Career Skills	\$332
Seek Limited	\$297
Madec Jobs Australia	\$160
AB Recruitment	\$55
Total	\$809,015

Centrelink

Recruitment Agency	Cost
Peoplebank Recruitment	\$1,853,203
Forstaff Australia	\$1,348,139
IPA Personnel	\$999,741
Icon Recruitment	\$437,156
Hoban Recruitment	\$400,113
DFP Recruitment Services	\$283,723
Chandler Macleod	\$262,513
Hansen and Searson	\$138,600
Regent Recruitment	\$129,787
Select Australasia	\$101,600
Hudson	\$53,408
Hays Personnel Services	\$24,940
Kelly Services	\$23,100
Network Recruitment	\$19,019

Recruitment Agency	Cost
Total	\$6,075,042

Medicare Australia

Recruitment Agency	Cost
IPA Personnel Pty Ltd	\$184,999
Hudson Global Resources (Aust) P/L	\$54,854
Hansen Searson Ford	\$47,880
The Green & Green Group Pty Ltd	\$25,210
McArthur Management Services	\$23,250
Tanna Partners	\$22,910
Drake Australia Pty Ltd	\$22,550
Chandler & McLeod Pty Ltd	\$18,638
Hays Personnel Services (Australia)	\$14,093
Recruitment Solutions Limited	\$14,044
Network Recruitment Services	\$13,330
Adcorp.Green	\$12,844
Candle Australia Limited	\$12,825
Manpower Services (Aust) P/L	\$12,765
The Next Step Recruitment Company	\$12,027
Careers Unlimited Pty Ltd	\$6,815
The Public Affairs Recruitment	\$6,344
Adecco Australia Pty Ltd	\$5,287
Select Australasia Pty Ltd	\$3,397
J M L Australia Pty Ltd	\$2,900
Spherion Recruitment	\$1,908
Peoplebank Recruitment Pty Ltd	\$1,880
Crossways Consulting	\$1,800
Coopers Recruitment	\$1,310
MLCOA – New South Wales	\$990
Pro Active Strategies P/L	\$520
Ada Management Services	\$509
Searson Buck Pty Ltd	\$450
Verossity Pty Ltd	\$420
Total	\$526,749

Australian Hearing

Recruitment Agency	Cost
Jocellin Jansson Pty	\$120,091
Hudson Global Resources	\$92,499
Hays Personnel Services Australia	\$76,041
Finite Recruitment Pty Ltd	\$75,577
Absolute Recruitment	\$59,977
HJB Priority	\$52,840
Korn Ferry International	\$47,979
ESperille Pty Ltd	\$39,282
Select Australasia	\$35,530
Small and Associates	\$33,843
Adecco	\$30,300
Enigma HR Pty Ltd	\$27,900
Kerr Family Investment	\$27,664
Q Executive Search	\$24,550
HubNet Global Resources	\$21,829
Robert Half Australia	\$20,840
Mondo Consulting	\$20,613
PKL Personnel Pty Ltd	\$16,165
North Coast Workforce	\$15,738
Carole Thomas and Associates	\$15,466
Stopgap	\$14,252
Online Personnel	\$14,138
InterPro Australia	\$14,116
Fusion Global Pty Ltd	\$13,080

Recruitment Agency	Cost
Quadrant Recruitment	\$11,445
Tamworth Employment Services	\$6,954
HR Matters	\$6,128
MHS Recruitment and Training	\$4,273
Fox Personnel	\$3,894
Ross Human Directions	\$2,523
Hamilton James and Bruce	\$1,336
Coopers Recruitment	\$954
Western Personnel	\$647
Bridge Personnel	\$174
Munro Select Pty Ltd	\$110
Total	\$948,748

Health Services Australia

Recruitment Agency	Cost
Talentpartners	\$61,380
Total	\$61,380

To prepare this answer it has taken approximately 14 hours and 23 minutes at an estimated cost of \$781.

Massage Service

(Question No. 3333)

Mr Bowen asked the Minister for Education, Science and Training, in writing, on 29 March 2006:

- (1) Did the Department or any agency in the Minister's portfolio pay for massages for its staff in 2005; if so, what sum was spent on this purpose.
- (2) What was the cost per massage?
- (3) How many staff made use of this service?

Ms Julie Bishop—The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

- (1) One business unit in CSIRO subsidised a staff massage programme to the total value of \$80. AIATSIS spent \$150 on providing a staff massage programme.
- (2) The business unit in CSIRO paid a subsidy of \$10 per person over six weeks. AIATSIS paid \$15 per massage per person.
- (3) Eight staff from the CSIRO business unit and ten AIATSIS staff.

Media Training

(Question No. 3353)

Mr Bowen asked the Minister for Human Services, in writing, on 29 March 2006:

- (1) Did the department or any agency in the Minister's portfolio engage the services of a media training company in 2005; if so, how many individuals in the department and each agency received media training.
- (2) For 2005, what sum was spent on media training by the department and each agency in the Minister's portfolio.

Mr Hockey—The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

Core Department

- (1) The department did not engage the services of a media training company in 2005.
- (2) Not applicable.

Child Support Agency

- (1) In 2005 the Child Support Agency engaged the services of Centrelink FST Shared Services to provide media training to twelve individuals within the agency.
- (2) In 2005 the total sum the Child Support Agency paid to Centrelink FST Shared Services for media training was \$21,387.

CRS Australia

- (1) CRS Australia provided media training to 25 managers in 2005.
- (2) CRS Australia spent a total of \$7379.90 on media training.

Centrelink

- (1) Centrelink did not engage the services of a media training company in 2005.
- (2) Not applicable.

Medicare Australia

- (1) Medicare Australia engaged Stone Wilson Consulting to conduct Media Skills training for three SES Officers.

- (2) The amount spent for 2005 was \$4,015.

Australian Hearing

- (1) No media training consultancy was utilised by Australian Hearing during 2005.
 (2) Not applicable.

Health Services Australia

- (1) HSA did not engage the services of a media training company during 2005.
 (2) Not applicable.

To prepare this answer it has taken 9 hours and 53 minutes at an estimated cost of \$487.

Amberley Air Force Base

(Question No. 3583)

Mr McClelland asked the Minister for Defence, in writing, on 29 May 2006:

- (1) Did his office receive two phone calls from Mr Mark Kerr on 27 February and 28 February regarding an incident that occurred when he drove his truck onto the Amberley Air Force Base on 27 February 2006.
- (2) Can he confirm Mr Kerr's claim that he was asked to drive the truck carrying a 20 tonne piece of heavy equipment through the security gate to clear the entrance without either his identity or the contents of the truck being verified by Chubb security personnel.
- (3) Was Mr Kerr escorted or monitored during his time inside the base: if not, why not.
- (4) Were any security protocols at the base breached by Mr Kerr's treatment on this occasion.
- (5) Has he had Mr Kerr's claims investigated: if not, why not and what action will he take to investigate the incident and remedy any breaches in protocol or its application.

Dr Nelson—The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

- (1) Yes. These calls were referred to Air Force for follow-up with Mr Kerr.
- (2) Yes. For safety reasons, Mr Kerr was directed to move his vehicle into the base, park and return immediately to the Pass Office for clearance.

On 27 February 2006 and at peak entry time (6.45am), three heavy vehicles (semi-trailers) attempted to enter the base. Two parked in the reserved parking spaces, which allow drivers to alight to obtain entry passes. Mr Kerr's vehicle was the third to attempt entry, and he parked it in such a way that the vehicle obstructed traffic in one entry lane.

One of the Chubb security guards on duty that morning approached Mr Kerr and asked him to move his truck into the base, just forward of the main access point, and then return immediately to the Pass Office for clearance. Mr Kerr became irate and verbally aggressive towards the guard and asked why the other two trucks were not required to move. The guard pointed out the traffic congestion being caused by Mr Kerr's vehicle, and Mr Kerr then complied with the guard's instructions.

- (3) Yes.
- (4) No.
- (5) Yes. Corporate Services and Infrastructure Group Officers at Amberley have conducted an investigation. No breaches of either security or protocol were detected. Chubb security staff involved adhered to all extant security and safety procedures. Mr Kerr was treated in a polite and courteous manner at all times.

Child Care

(Question No. 3688)

Ms Plibersek asked the Minister for Human Services, in writing, on 19 June 2006:

- (1) Do any agencies in the Minister's portfolio offer childcare to employees; if so, which agencies.
- (2) In respect of agencies that offer childcare, (a) is the childcare (i) long day care, (ii) outside school hours care, or (iii) another type of care, (b) is the childcare facility located at the agency's premises; if so, (i) what is the maximum capacity of the childcare facility, (ii) is enrolment at the facility available to children whose parents are not employees of the agency, and (iii) do the children of agency employees receive preferential enrolment over the children of non-employees; if so, what are the provisions of the preference rule; and (c) will the Minister provide a copy of the information sheet given to employees seeking employer assistance with childcare.
- (3) Are employees given the option of salary-sacrificing childcare offered by the agency.
- (4) How many employees within each of the Minister's portfolio agencies have made salary-sacrifice arrangements with the employing agency for childcare expenses.
- (5) In respect of the employees identified in the response to part (5), how many use on site-childcare.
- (6) Do any of the Minister's portfolio agencies have salary-sacrifice agreements relating to childcare with employees who do not use the on-site childcare centre; if so, how many agreements of this type are there?

- (7) Will the Minister provide a copy of the childcare benefits provisions from the Certified Agreements of each of the Minister's portfolio agencies.
- (8) What financial assistance for childcare, other than salary-sacrificed fees, is available to employees (including those on AWAs) of each of the Minister's portfolio agencies.
- (9) Have any agencies in the Minister's portfolio sought private or public rulings from the Australian Taxation Office relating to childcare and fringe benefits tax; if so, when.
- (10) Do any of the Minister's portfolio agencies have arrangements with other Government agencies to provide childcare to employees, such as sharing childcare facility costs at a site within, or external to, one of the agencies.

Mr Hockey—The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

Core Department

- (1) The core department does not offer childcare to employees.
- (2) Not applicable.
- (3) Not applicable.
- (4) One employee has made arrangements for salary sacrifice payments for private childcare arrangements.
- (5) The core department does not provide on-site childcare.
- (6) The core department permits salary sacrifice arrangements to pay childcare costs at an off-site child care provider. There is one such arrangement in place at the time of answering this question. The arrangement is a transitional one with the on-site provision of childcare by their previous employer, to allow the carer time to make new childcare arrangements.
- (7) The core department does not have a Certified Agreement.
- (8) There is no other financial assistance available for childcare, other than salary sacrifice.
- (9) The core department has not sought private or public rulings from the Australian Taxation Office relating to childcare and the payment of fringe benefits tax.
- (10) The core department has an arrangement with one other government agency to provide transitional arrangements while carers who have moved from that agency to Human Services can continue to use existing child care arrangements for up to 3 months while finding a new child-care provider.

Child Support Agency

- (1) The Child Support Agency does not offer childcare to employees.
- (2) Not applicable.
- (3) Not applicable.
- (4) Not applicable.
- (5) Not applicable.
- (6) The Child Support Agency does not offer salary-sacrifice arrangements relating to childcare.
- (7) The Child Support Agency Certified Agreement contains no childcare provisions.
- (8) As a choice of alternative options, non-Senior Executive Service employees employed in the Child Support Agency on an Australian Workplace Agreement are entitled to receive up to a maximum of \$350 per year to offset the cost of childcare.
- (9) The Child Support Agency has not sought private or public rulings from the Australian Taxation Office relating to childcare and the payment of fringe benefits tax.
- (10) The Child Support Agency has no arrangements with other Government agencies to provide childcare to employees.

CRS Australia

- (1) CRS Australia does not offer childcare to employees.
- (2) Not applicable.
- (3) Salary packaging arrangements are available for CRS Australia employees but child care is not one of the options currently available. Under an Australian Workplace Agreement, staff may negotiate reimbursement of child care costs.
- (4) No employees have made salary-sacrifice arrangement for childcare expenses.
- (5) Not applicable.
- (6) Not applicable.
- (7) The childcare benefits available to CRS Australia employees are in clauses 295 to 298 of the CRS Australia Certified Agreement 2005-2008 which are set out below.

Family Care Assistance

295. CRS Australia has established an Aged Care and Child Care Advisory service to provide personalised advice in relation to employee caring responsibilities. All CRS Australia employees and their relatives can contact the service to receive personalised advice with regard to childcare or issues to do with elder relatives. This service is free to staff.

Dependant Care Responsibilities

296. A Manager may approve payment to a CRS Australia employee of additional dependant care costs resulting from official overnight travel.

297. The payment is confined to circumstances where the employee is the sole primary care giver and has incurred additional costs for the care of a family member(s) as a result of being directed to travel overnight on short notice.

298. Reimbursement may be up to \$50 per overnight absence on the provision of receipts.

- (8) The CRS Australia Certified Agreement 2005-2008 provides for the payment of additional dependant care costs that result from official overnight travel. The payment is confined to circumstances where the employee is the sole primary care giver and has incurred additional costs for the care of a family member(s) as a result of having to travel overnight on short notice. The reimbursement may be up to \$50 per overnight absence. Executive Level 1 and Executive Level 2 staff may seek to include reimbursement of childcare costs in an Australian Workplace Agreement (AWA), however, at this time, no AWAs include this benefit.
- (9) CRS Australia has not sought private or public rulings from the Australian Taxation Office relating to childcare and fringe benefits tax.
- (10) CRS Australia does not have any arrangements with other Government agencies to provide childcare to employees

Centrelink

- (1) No, however Centrelink does intend to implement a child-care program.
- (2) (a) The tender document for the intended child-care program states that the ability to provide:
- (i) long day care as most important
 - (ii) outside school hours care as highly desirable, and
 - (iii) occasional care services as desirable.
- (b) Centrelink will undertake internal surveying of employees and conduct demographic studies to determine suitable locations for child-care places, based on existing childcare services and the requirements of employees.
- (i) Centrelink is yet to determine the maximum capacity of any centre.
 - (ii) Enrolment to the centres will be available to non-Centrelink/DHS employees.
 - (iii) Any place not taken by a Centrelink or DHS employee will be offered to members of the community. Once a community enrolment has been effected, there will be no provision to ask for that place to be vacated.
- (c) An information sheet is not yet available.
- (3) No, however Centrelink employees will have the choice to salary package the fees or claim childcare benefit and the 30 per cent tax rebate. Employees will not be able to do both.
- (4) Centrelink response is nil.
- (5) Centrelink response is nil.
- (6) Centrelink response is nil.
- (7) Childcare benefits provisions from the Centrelink Certified Agreement (2006 – 2009) are below:

Section 35 School holiday care allowance

35.1 Centrelink will pay a school holiday care allowance to eligible employees for a maximum of eight weeks per calendar year during school holidays.

35.2 School holiday care allowance is \$24.85 gross per day for each child of school age placed in approved childcare while the parent is at work in Centrelink. Where more than one parent works for Centrelink, they must both/all be at work in Centrelink on a day that a claim is made and only one claim per day for each child will be paid. The maximum allowance that may be paid is \$248.50 per week per employee.

35.3 Approved child-care is care provided by: a service which is approved by the Department of Family and Community services to receive Commonwealth child-care payments; or programs which are initiated or supported by Centrelink.

35.4 Employees employed on a short term non-ongoing basis do not have access to the allowance.

Section 67 Additional family care arrangements

67.1 Where employees are required by Centrelink to travel on official business outside their regular hours (including normal travel time), the CEO may, in exceptional circumstances, approve payment for some or all the costs, net of government assistance, of additional family care arrangements.

- (8) Centrelink can provide a School Holiday Care Allowance of up to \$24.85 gross per day, to a maximum of \$248.50 per week per on-going employee.
- (9) Centrelink response is no.
- (10) Centrelink response is no.

Medicare Australia

- (1) No.
- (2) Not applicable.
- (3) Not applicable.
- (4) Not applicable.
- (5) Not applicable.
- (6) Not applicable.
- (7) The Medicare Australia Certified Agreement 2005-2008 provides for the following:

Clause 58: Vacation Childcare Subsidy

58.1: To support employees who have applied for leave and are required to work due to operational requirements, Medicare Australia will subsidise school holiday care during all school holidays.

58.2: During school holiday periods, the CEO will approve a payment of \$13 per day for each child for the cost of school age children of an employee where the child is placed in an accredited program. This allowance is subject to further increase in line with the increases contained in this Agreement as set out in the table below

On first pay period commencing on or after certification	From 14 December 2006	From 13 December 2007
\$13.00	\$13.50	\$14.10

Clause 61: Carer Assistance

61.1: Medicare Australia will continue to provide employees with information about child and dependant care services. This ranges from, but is not limited to, a broad outline of local services with contact numbers to contracted external information services.

61.2: The needs of employees should be periodically reviewed to maximise benefits. These can be reviewed locally in a number of ways, including employee surveys, focus groups and formal needs assessments.

61.3: In recognition of dependant care responsibilities, the CEO may approve reimbursement of reasonable expenses from an employee's additional family care arrangements made necessary where an employee is:

- Required to travel away from their normal work location for business purposes; and/or
- Directed to work additional hours or to attend a conference or training course outside the standard bandwidth or outside the employee's regular agreed hours of work; and/or
- Other special circumstances exist which the CEO considers justifies the payment of reasonable expenses arising from additional dependant care responsibilities.

61.4: Expenses arising from additional dependant care arrangements means:

- Expenses incurred by the employee to enable the employee to conduct Medicare Australia business away from home outside the normal hours of work;
- Dependant care expenses that are not usually paid by the employee; and
- Expenses not reimbursed through the Government Childcare Assistance Scheme (where partial reimbursement has been provided by that scheme a claim for the residual may be lodged with Medicare Australia).

61.5: The employee is required to substantiate their expenses through the production of receipts from the care provider.

- (8) The financial assistance provided to staff covered by the Certified Agreement is outlined in (7) above. Staff on AWAs do not currently have access to any provisions relating to childcare.
- (9) No.
- (10) No.

Australian Hearing

- (1) Australian Hearing does not offer childcare to employees.
- (2) Not applicable.
- (3) Australian Hearing does not offer childcare to employees and so therefore there is no salary-sacrificing option for childcare offered.
- (4) No employees at Australian Hearing are offered salary-sacrifice arrangements for childcare expenses.
- (5) Refer to item (4).
- (6) Australian Hearing has no on-site childcare centres and therefore does not have any salary-sacrifice agreements relating to childcare with employees who do not use on-site childcare centres.
- (7) Clause 7.8 of the Australian Hearing Certified Agreement 2004 states:
 - (7.8.1) "Where approved annual leave falling in school holiday periods is cancelled by Australian Hearing, or an employee is recalled from annual leave during school holiday periods, Australian Hearing will contribute up to a maximum of \$150 per week, per family towards childcare arrangements."

(7.8.2) "Employees are required to provide Australian Hearing with appropriate receipts when claiming reimbursement for childcare arrangements."

- (8) Refer to response Question (7).
- (9) Australian Hearing has not sought private or public rulings from the Australian Tax Office relating to childcare and fringe benefits tax.
- (10) Australian Hearing has no arrangements with other Government agencies to provide childcare to employees.

Health Services Australia

Health Services Australia does not provide childcare as a condition of employment to its staff.

To prepare this answer it has taken 21 hours at an estimated cost of \$1150.

Leadership Coaching

(Question No. 3707)

Mr Bowen asked the Minister for Human Services, in writing, on 19 June 2006:

- (1) How many senior officials in the Minister's Department have a personal leadership coach or trainer.
- (2) In each of the cases identified in part (1), what is the cost per hour of the leadership coach.
- (3) What sum has been expended on leadership coaching in the Minister's Department during the 2005-06 financial year.

Mr Hockey—The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

Core Department

- (1) Six senior officials had a personal leadership coach as of 30th June 2006
- (2) The cost per session is averaged at \$405 (8 sessions). It has been averaged as coaches have different rates for their services.
- (3) \$3240 was paid for personal coaching during 2005-2006.

Child Support Agency

- (1) The Child Support Agency (CSA) employed 14 SES level staff during the 2005-06 financial year. Of these, three staff have participated in leadership coaching.
- (2) The cost of coaching was between \$256 and \$275 per hour.
- (3) The total cost of leadership coaching for CSA senior executive staff was \$8,125 for the 2005-06 financial year.

CRS Australia

- (1) Nil.
- (2) Nil.
- (3) Nil.

To prepare this answer it has taken 4 hours and 27 minutes at an estimated cost of \$161.

Swan Island Training Area

(Question No. 3733)

Mr Melham asked the Minister for Defence, in writing, on 20 June 2006:

- (1) How many (a) Australian Defence Force and (b) Defence civilian personnel are currently stationed or employed at the Swan Island Training Area.
- (2) How many other Australian Government or other personnel are currently stationed or employed at the Swan Island Training Area.
- (3) What Australian Defence Force training activities are carried out at the Swan Island Training Area.
- (4) Since March 1996, have any Federal or State Members of Parliament (a) visited the Swan Island Training Area and (b) received classified briefings on activities undertaken at Swan Island; if so, which Members and when did the visits and briefings take place.

Dr Nelson—The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

- (1) (a), (b) and (2) Defence maintains appropriate records in relation to personnel stationed or employed at the Swan Island Training Area. For security reasons, it would be inappropriate to divulge these figures.
- (3) Swan Island is a Military Exercise Area. It provides a venue for naval training in the use of radar flares, facilities for Army Reserve training and a small demolitions range for Army use. While Defence maintains appropriate records in relation to its training exercises at this facility, some activities are classified.
- (4) (a) and (b) Specific details concerning visits to Swan Island Training Area and classified briefings provided to visitors on activities are not appropriate for disclosure.

Child Care
(Question No. 3790)

Mr Murphy asked the Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, on 8 August 2006:

- (1) How many Commonwealth funded, community based, out-of-school-hours child care places are there in the electoral division of Lowe, and what is the name and address of each centre providing those places.
- (2) In respect of each centre identified in part (1), how many provide out-of-school-hours places for children with special needs.
- (3) In respect of each centre identified in part (2), what sum was paid under the Special Needs Subsidy Scheme (SNSS) each year since the scheme's implementation.
- (4) Is he aware of concerns raised with the Department of Family and Community Services that:
 - (a) the SNSS and the Inclusion Support Scheme do not
 - (i) provide adequate funding to successfully include children with moderate or high support needs into mainstream out-of-school-hours programs on all occasions and
 - (ii) provide adequate funding to pay wage and other costs connected with employing additional staff to meet the required staff/child ratios, and
 - (b) duty-of-care and best practice compliance requires a one-on-one child/carer ratio or better to cater for children with moderate or high support needs, without reducing service levels for other children; if not, why not; if so, what is his response.
- (5) How many out-of-school-hours child care providers in the electoral division of Lowe have indicated
 - (a) an inability to care for children with moderate or high needs and/or
 - (b) that they are willing to care for a child with moderate or high needs if paid a greater subsidy.
- (6) Is he aware of comments by Child Care Queensland committee member and national president, Gwynn Bridge, published in the Courier Mail on 4 June 2004, that the SNSS funding increase to its current level of \$14.50 was inadequate; if so, what is his response; if not, why not.
- (7) Is he aware that the Ella Community Centre, in the electoral division of Lowe, may be forced to abandon its out-of-school-hours program due to a lack of funds to employ staff to cater adequately for children with moderate and high special needs.
- (8) Will the Government commit additional recurrent operational subsidies, on a needs basis, for community based out-of-school-hours child care centres, so that Inner-West parents may continue to access child care for children with moderate to high special needs; if not, why not.
- (9) Will the Government restructure the SNSS and Inclusion Support Scheme to provide tiered subsidies for children with (a) low, (b) moderate and (c) high support needs; if not, why not.

Mr Brough—The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

Information on the name and location of child care services is available publicly through the Child Care Access Hotline on 1800 670 305. The Government generally funds parent rather than centres.

The Inclusion Support Subsidy (ISS) is provided to assist child care service providers with the cost of including children with additional needs in approved child care services. ISS can contribute to the provision of relief staff while the carer attends training, specialist equipment and resources and employing an additional worker to increase the staff to child ratio. It is important to note that the focus of the Inclusion Support is to build the services' capacity to include a child with ongoing high support needs.

The subsidy rate for the ISS is currently \$15.04 per hour and is indexed annually.

Child Care Services are invited to contact their local Inclusion Support Agency, who will assist in identifying strategies for the service to include children with ongoing high support needs and may identify a need to access additional supports, such as ISS.

The board of the Ella Community Centre has told my Department, on 10 October 2006, that it has decided to continue the operation of its outside school hours care service. The Centre aims to increase enrolments and will continue to provide care for children with special needs.

My Office has corresponded with the Ella Community Centre and provided information on funding available through FaCSIA programs to assist the service.

**Coastal Catchment Initiative: Water Quality Improvement Plans
(Question No. 3794)**

Mr Albanese asked the Minister representing the Minister for the Environment and Heritage, in writing, on 8 August 2006:

- (1) In respect of the Coastal Catchments Initiative, (a) why have no Water Quality Improvement Plans (WQIPs) been finalised and (b) what has caused delays to plans for (i) Douglas Shire Waterways, (ii) the Peel-Harvey Estuary, (iii) the Derwent Estuary and (iv) Adelaide's Port Waterways.
- (2) Are there also delays in the preparation of WQIPs for the (a) Myall-Wallis Lakes, (b) Port Phillip Bay and Western Port and (c) Great Barrier Reef catchments.
- (3) Does the Coastal Catchments Initiative provide dedicated funding to assist the implementation of WQIPs; if not, how has the Government determined that WQIPs could be adequately supported through other funding avenues.
- (4) In respect of WQIP implementation, if funding is not available through the Coastal Catchments Initiative, (a) which Commonwealth programs may be able to provide financial support, (b) will it be a stated priority for 'investment' under those programmes and (c) what systems or agreements will ensure that those programs give priority to supporting WQIP implementation.
- (5) What is the relationship between WQIPs and regional Natural Resource Management (NRM) plans.
- (6) Will the regional NRM program support implementation of WQIPs; if so, (a) what formal arrangements are in place with regional NRM groups to ensure WQIP implementation will be supported by regional NRM funding and (b) how will the Government ensure regional NRM groups give priority to funding activities in WQIPs.
- (7) What funds have been committed, or allocated, to date by regional NRM groups exclusively for WQIP implementation.
- (8) For each WQIP, (a) what is the regional NRM group and (b) what sum has been allocated by that group, and for which financial years.
- (9) What intergovernmental arrangements are proposed for the implementation of WQIPs.
- (10) During the next phase of the Natural Heritage Trust, what arrangements are proposed to support WQIP implementation.
- (11) What is the estimated cost to government(s) for implementation of the WQIP for (a) Adelaide's Port Waterways, (b) the Peel-Harvey Estuary, (c) Douglas Shire Waterways, (d) the Derwent Estuary and (e) Moreton Bay.
- (12) What will be the cost-share arrangements between governments for the implementation of WQIPs.

Mr Truss—The Minister for the Environment and Heritage has provided the following answer to the honourable member's question:

- (1) Original timelines for the preparation of Water Quality Improvement Plans (WQIPs) have been extended in response to the technical challenges presented by the planning process and the need to engage a wide range of stakeholders in WQIP preparation.
- (2) Yes.
- (3) (4) and (5) There is no dedicated implementation funding under the Coastal Catchments Initiative (CCI). WQIPs developed under the CCI are intended to support existing water quality management arrangements in accredited NRM plans by enhancing target setting, better defining investment priorities and identifying key institutional and policy settings required to achieve the plans' objectives. As such, their delivery will be incorporated into regional NRM investment processes. These investment processes draw on a wide range of government and private sector funds.
- (6) Yes. Standard regional investment processes, as set out in NHT Bilateral Agreements, will be followed.
- (7) and (8)

WQIP	NRM group	2005-06 allocation	2006-07 allocation	2007-08 allocation
Peel-Harvey Estuary	South West Catchments Council	0	\$625,000	\$465,000
Douglas Shire	Wet Tropics	\$58,700	\$46,000	-
Derwent Estuary	NRM South	0	-	-
Adelaide's Port Waterways	Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges NRM Board	0	-	-
Moreton Bay ¹	SEQ Catchments	0	0	-
Myall-Wallis Lakes ²	Hunter Central Rivers CMA	0	0	0
Port Phillip Bay-Western Port ²	Port Phillip Bay and Westernport CMA	0	0	0
Swan-Canning Estuary ²	Swan Catchment Council	0	0	0
Vasse-Wonnerup and Geographe Bay ²	South West Catchments Council	0	0	0
Darwin Harbour ²	Northern Territory NRM Group	0	0	0
Tully River ²	Wet Tropics	0	0	0
Mackay-Whitsunday ² catchments	Mackay-Whitsunday	0	0	0

WQIP	NRM group	2005-06 allocation	2006-07 allocation	2007-08 allocation
Burdekin River ²	Burdekin Dry-Tropics	0	0	0
Ross River/Townsville ²	Burdekin Dry-Tropics	0	0	0
Burnett River ²	Mary Burnett	0	0	0

¹ The WQIP is due for completion during 2006-2007.

² The WQIP is due for completion during 2007-2008.

- (9) See response to (3), (4), (5) & (6) above.
- (10) Arrangements for the next phase of the Natural Heritage Trust are yet to be finalised.
- (11) An estimation of implementation costs for government(s) is available for the Peel-Harvey, Douglas Shire and Derwent Estuary. For the Peel-Harvey WQIP this is approximately \$21 million over 10 years. For the Douglas Shire WQIP, total implementation costs over 7 years are approximately \$20 million to \$30 million, with a significant proportion of this (\$18-\$24 million) in the form of wastewater treatment plant upgrades borne by local government. Implementation of the Derwent Estuary WQIP is estimated to cost \$1.1 million over 5 years.
- (12) Where dedicated Australian Government funding, over and above investment through regional processes, is considered appropriate, this will be negotiated with the relevant jurisdiction and /or regional body on a case by case basis.

Werribee Centrelink Office

(Question No. 3848)

Ms Gillard asked the Minister for Human Services, in writing, on 8 August 2006:

- (1) How many effective full-time positions existed at the Werribee Centrelink office at (a) 1 July 2005 and (b) 1 March 2006.
- (2) In the week commencing 27 February 2006, (a) how many people were turned away from the Werribee Centrelink office without an interview for Newstart allowance and (b) how many Newstart interviews were performed at the Werribee Centrelink office.
- (3) Over the past six months at the Werribee Centrelink office, what is the average waiting time, from initial contact to payment of Newstart allowance into a recipient's bank account.
- (4) How many Newstart recipients were in the electorate of Lalor at (a) 1 March 2006, (b) 1 April 2006, (c) 1 May 2006, (d) 1 June 2006, (e) 1 July 2006, and (f) 1 August 2006.
- (5) How many Newstart recipients have had payments reduced since the introduction of the Welfare to Work changes on 1 July 2006.

Mr Hockey— The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

- (1) (a) As at 1 July 2005, Werribee Customer Service Centre had 49.7 full-time employment positions.
(b) As at 1 March 2006, Werribee Customer Service Centre had 42.06 full-time employment positions.
- (2) (a) It is not Centrelink's practice to turn customers away. New customers applying for Newstart Allowance at the point of their initial contact with Centrelink are referred to an interview with a Job Network provider, arrangements are also made at this time for the customer to return to the Centrelink office (after their interview with their Job Network member) to finalise their Newstart Allowance claim. Customers not referred to a Job Network provider have their claim actioned when they initially contact their Centrelink office.
(b) This information is not available.
- (3) Analysis of records of recipients over the last six months indicates that recipients most commonly receive payments into their bank accounts 14¹ days after initial contact.
- (4) The number of Newstart recipients that reside in the electorate of Lalor is as follows:

Question Number	Number of Customers receiving Newstart in- come support.
(a)	3386 ²
(b)	3317 ³
(c)	3366 ⁴
(d)	3395 ⁵
(e)	3454 ⁶
(f)	3472 ⁷

- (5) Nationally 658⁸ Newstart recipients have had payments reduced because of changes directly related to the introduction of Welfare to Work changes on 1 July 2006.

¹ Data source: Centrelink's Data Services Team, extracted the data by SAS dated 28 August 2006

It is an mode average in days for customers who made initial contact from 1/1/2006 to 30/6/2006, and were subsequently granted and paid a Newstart Allowance payment, where the office delivering service for Newstart Allowance is currently Werribee.

The amount of time between initial contact and delivery of payment can vary for a number of reasons. For example, time taken for the customer to return documents to Centrelink, waiting periods, preclusion periods, non-payment periods, availability of Centrelink staff and/or the customer for an interview, casual work resulting in the customer having no entitlement for a payment or several payments.

² Data source: Centrelink's Data Services Team, extracted the data by SAS dated 3 March 2006.

It includes all Newstart customers with a status of current.

CDEP customers have been excluded.

Customers with Zero Rate have been excluded.

³ Data source: Centrelink's Data Services Team, extracted the data by SAS dated 7 April 2006.

It includes all Newstart customers with a status of current.

CDEP customers have been excluded.

Customers with Zero Rate have been excluded.

⁴ Data source: Centerline's Data Services Team extracted the data by SAS dated 5 May 2006

It includes all Newstart customers with a status of current.

CDEP customers have been excluded.

Customers with Zero Rate have been excluded.

⁵ Data source: Centrelink's Data Services Team, extracted the data by SAS dated 2 June 2006.

It includes all Newstart customers with a status of current.

CDEP customers have been excluded.

Customers with Zero Rate have been excluded.

⁶ Data source: Centrelink's Data Services Team, extracted the data by SAS dated 7 July 2006.

It includes all Newstart customers with a status of current.

CDEP customers have been excluded.

Customers with Zero Rate have been excluded.

⁷ Data source: Centrelink's Data Services Team, extracted the data by SAS dated 4 August 2006.

It includes all Newstart customers with a status of current.

CDEP customers have been excluded.

Customers with Zero Rate have been excluded.

⁸ Data source: Weekly Welfare to Work Reports, produced by Data Services, Centrelink extracted the data by SAS and is current as at the 11 August 2006. The report includes all Newstart customers who have had an 8 week non-payment period applied after a serious failure or repeated participation failures. It does not include customers who have another type of non-payment period applied, or payments have not been made for other reasons. This does not include customers who have had their payments reduced or stopped for other reasons.

To prepare this answer it has taken approximately 33 hours and 50 minutes at an estimated cost of \$1,709.

Biodiesel

(Question No. 3866)

Mr Martin Ferguson asked the Minister for Industry, Tourism and Resources, in writing, on 9 August 2006:

What research has been undertaken on the effects of biodiesel on Australian diesel passenger car engines?

Mr Ian Macfarlane—The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

I am not aware of any formal research on Australian diesel passenger car engines.

However, I am aware that a number of councils around Australia have conducted trials on their fleet vehicles and buses.

Newcastle City Council for example has conducted a trial of biodiesel in their fleet vehicles. This includes utility vehicles, four wheel drives and trucks. I understand that Newcastle City Council will be releasing their report on this project in the next month or so.

Israel**(Question No. 3871)**

Mr Murphy asked the Prime Minister, in writing, on 09 August 2006:

Was he advised prior to 13 July 2006 that Israel intended to make a military strike in Beirut and on the Hezbollah in South Lebanon.

Mr Howard—The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

I was not advised in advance of Israel's intentions to make military strikes in Beirut and on the Hezbollah in South Lebanon.

Casino to Murwillumbah Railway Line**(Question No. 3970)**

Mrs Elliot asked the Prime Minister, in writing, on 04 September 2006:

- (1) Will the Federal Government support the New South Wales Government's proposal to invest \$75 million in the restoration of the Casino to Murwillumbah railway line if this sum is matched by the Commonwealth.
- (2) As the Federal Government has reaffirmed its previous offer of \$30 million towards the project, will it commit the remaining \$45 million required to secure the line's future.
- (3) Will the Federal Government commit the \$75 million in federal funding required to restore the Casino to Murwillumbah railway line.

Mr Howard—The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

- (1) Passenger rail services in New South Wales (NSW) are a matter for the NSW Government and therefore any decision to reopen the Casino to Murwillumbah rail line for passenger services is a matter for the NSW Government.
- (2) and (3) I am advised that the former Minister for Transport and Regional Services, the Hon Warren Truss MP, has written to the NSW Minister for Transport, the Hon John Watkins MP, seeking a detailed project proposal before making any decisions on Commonwealth funding.

Goods and Services Tax**(Question No. 3991)**

Ms Annette Ellis asked the Treasurer, in writing, on 4 September 2006:

- (1) In respect of GST Ruling 2006/2, which requires businesses to pay the full amount of GST upon receipt of part-payment for a good or service,
 - (a) how long will businesses have to wait for a refund if a transaction does not proceed and
 - (b) can he provide assurance that small businesses will not be disadvantaged by this ruling; if not, which sectors of small business are likely to be most severely affected.
- (2) In respect of his comment on 6 April 2006 that: "...this matter is going to be taken to the courts so the courts can give a ruling in relation to that and we will have a look at what the ruling is",
 - (a) what progress has been made in the courts and
 - (b) what is the Government's response to the outcome.

Mr Dutton—The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

- (1) (a) Taxpayers who account on a cash basis are not required to pay the full amount of GST upon receipt of a part-payment. They are only required to pay GST on the amount actually received.
Taxpayers who account on a non-cash basis may have to pay the full amount of GST upon receipt of a part payment. This will occur as a result of the operation of the normal GST rules.
However, if the part payment is a security deposit, then no GST is payable until a later time when the deposit becomes part of the payment for a supply, or is forfeited. Goods and Services Tax Ruling GSTR 2006/2 explains how and when this GST deferral applies.
In the circumstance described above, the business does not have to wait for a refund if the sale does not proceed as it did not have to pay the GST.
If a business has paid the GST, because, for example, it does not account on a cash basis and the amount was not eligible to be treated as a security deposit (for example, because the amount of the deposit was too high to be considered a security deposit), it will receive any refund it is entitled to when it lodges its next activity statement.
- (b) Small businesses are not disadvantaged by GSTR 2006/2 which explains that businesses can delay paying GST on security deposits whether they use the cash or non-cash accounting method.
- (2) (a) On 5 June 2006 the Administrative Appeals Tribunal handed down its decision in *Reliance Carpet Company Pty Ltd v the Commissioner of Taxation*. The case concerned a supply of real property. A 10% deposit was paid and later forfeited to the vendor as the sale did not proceed. The Tribunal ruled that a GST obligation arose in respect of the for-

feited deposit. The amount that is subject to GST is the amount of the forfeited deposit and not the contract price for the sale of the property.

- (b) The taxpayer has appealed the Tribunal's decision to the Federal Court and the Government awaits the outcome of the appeal.

South Australian Centrelink Office

(Question No. 3992)

Ms Annette Ellis asked the Minister for Human Services, in writing, on 4 September 2006:

- (1) How many incidences of violence have occurred at South Australian Centrelink offices in the past (a) 12 months and (b) 24 months.
- (2) What measures have been put in place to prevent incidences of violence occurring at South Australian Centrelink Offices.

Mr Hockey—The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

- (1) (a) 41 incidents were reported from 1 September 2005 to 4 September 2006. (b) 86 incidents were reported from 1 September 2004 to 4 September 2006.
- (2) Centrelink has well-established policies and procedures for the prevention and management of customer aggression incidents. All Centrelink offices have security procedures, duress alarms, and established relationships with local police. Other measures implemented to prevent incidents of violence include:
 - training employees who serve customers in understanding their barriers, challenges and needs, the strategies to employ in difficult customer interactions and training employees in cultural awareness;
 - periodically reviewing local response guidelines and site security;
 - improving the physical aspects of offices, including extending and upgrading closed circuit television coverage in all offices;
 - employing security guards where required;
 - reviewing the way that customers who display violence are serviced;
 - improving queue wait times, and
 - promoting customer self-service options.

To prepare this answer it has taken 5 hours and 25 minutes at an estimated cost of \$288.

Proposed Centre of Excellence for Islamic Studies

(Question No. 3996)

Mr Murphy asked the Minister for Education, Science and Training, in writing on 4 September 2006:

- (1) Is one of the key initiatives of the National Action Plan to promote national security the creation of a world class centre of research and educational excellence in Islamic studies within a major Australian university or universities.
- (2) Does the media statement, issued on 16 July 2006 by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister, titled Key Initiatives Action Plan, state that the centre referred to in Part (1) is to play a leadership role in exploring the place of Islam in modern society.
- (3) In a statement issued jointly with the Minister for Education, Science and Training, titled \$8M for Centre of Excellence for Islamic Education National Action Plan, does the Minister's Parliamentary Secretary state that eight million dollars will be used for the establishment of this centre at an Australian university or universities.
- (4) In respect of the proposed centre of research and educational excellence in Islamic studies, (a) what are the details of the curriculum and (b) will it include critical analysis of Islam, including from, historical and literary criticism, consistent with other religious studies.
- (5) Has any Australian university expressed an interest in establishing a centre of excellence for Islamic education.

Ms Julie Bishop—The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

- (1) Yes.
- (2) Yes.
- (3) Yes.
- (4) Details are not available at this stage as curriculum will be developed by the university or universities selected to host the centre. The courses will provide a range of subjects relevant to Islamic studies, applying the usual academic rigour of the Australian university system.
- (5) Yes. Expressions of interest to host the centre of excellence for Islamic studies closed on 11 October 2006 and a number of proposals from universities were received.

F3 Link Road
(Question No. 4011)

Mr Fitzgibbon asked the Minister for Local Government, Territories and Roads, in writing, on 4 September 2006:

In respect of the F3 Link Road project, will he provide:

- (a) A progress update on construction between Seahampton and Branxton;
- (b) An estimated commencement date for construction;
- (c) An estimated completion date for construction;
- (d) The most recent project cost estimate; and
- (e) The sum expended to date by the Commonwealth.

Mr Lloyd—The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

- (a) Preconstruction work is underway, involving design, planning, environmental assessments, land acquisitions and utility adjustments. Given the increase in the cost estimate for the project from \$382 million to \$765 million in July 2005, New South Wales and Australian Government officials are currently considering how best to progress the project and will report to Governments on this.
- (b) The New South Wales Roads and Traffic Authority (RTA) estimates that all preconstruction activities should be completed by early to mid 2008. This should allow for construction to commence during 2008-09.
- (c) Until preconstruction activities have been completed, and project delivery issues have been finalised, estimated completion dates are not available.
- (d) The RTA provided a revised cost estimate of \$765 million for the project in July 2005. This is in 2005 dollars.
- (e) As at the end of August 2006, the Australian Government has provided \$37.4 million to the RTA for the project.

Crosby/Textor Contracts
(Question No. 4029)

Mr Kelvin Thomson asked the Minister representing the Minister for the Environment and Heritage, in writing, on 4 September 2006:

- (1) What contracts, if any, were granted to Crosby/Textor by the Minister, or by any departments or agencies in the Minister's portfolio in (a) 2004-05; and (b) 2005-06.
- (2) What contracts, if any, have been awarded to Crosby/Textor for (a) 2006-07; or (b) 2007-08.
- (3) In respect of each contract referred to in Parts (1) and (2), (a) what was, or is the cost; and (b) what work was, or will be, carried out by Crosby/Textor pursuant to that contract.

Mr Truss—The Minister for the Environment and Heritage has provided the following answer to the honourable member's question:

- (1) to (3) Nil.

KPMG Contracts
(Question No. 4058)

Mr Kelvin Thomson asked the Minister for Defence, in writing, on 4 September 2006:

- (1) What contracts have been awarded to KPMG by departments or agencies within the Minister's portfolio for the financial years (a) 2004-05, (b) 2005-06 and (c) 2006-07.
- (2) What is the cost of each contract identified in Part (1).

Dr Nelson—The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

- (1) and (2) **Defence: 2004-05**

Contract Description	Value (\$)
Training	5,480
Accounting Advice - Identical Items	10,725
Inventory Review	10,725
Financial Configuration Consulting Services	11,000
Probity Auditor Services for the Air Warfare Destroyer Program	11,000
Contractor Support	11,715
Contractor Support	12,685
Contractor Support	13,180
Professional Services	15,000
Professional Services	18,106
Financial services in relation to evaluation of tenders for sale-Ermington	18,150

Contract Description	Value (\$)
Financial services in relation to the evaluation of tenders for sale of former Defence site-Werrington	22,000
Provision of Consultancy Services	25,000
Contractor Support	29,288
Accounting Advice on Assets	40,865
Correct pricing problems with Assets Under Construction	44,664
Tax Support and Advice	60,855
Professional Services	68,702
Professional Services	72,600
Development of Business Continuity Plan	79,552
Configuration Management User Requirements Guide	88,000
Correct pricing problems with Assets Under Construction	88,755
Standard Defence Supply System (SDSS) Information Technology (IT) Audit Support	93,497
SDSS IT Audit Support	93,497
Tax Support and Advice	96,271
Consultancy for Contract	100,980
Advice on Explosive Ordnance	103,822
KPMG Explosive Ordnance Services Contract Review	105,383
Probity Auditor Services for the Air Warfare Destroyer Program	107,676
Probity Auditor Services for the Air Warfare Destroyer Program	110,000
Probity Auditor Services for the Air Warfare Destroyer Program	110,000
Engagement of Service Provider	118,580
Probity Auditor Services for the Air Warfare Destroyer Program	132,000
ANZAC Ship Project - Probity Auditor Services Contract Amendment	154,000
Correct pricing problems with Assets Under Construction	169,983
Probity Auditor Services for the Air Warfare Destroyer Program	181,500
Financial Configuration Consulting Services	242,383
Tax Management Services	262,000
ANZAC Ship Alliance Probity Auditor Amendment 1	264,000
Materiel Logistics Financial Framework Study	269,621
Tax Support and Advice	300,000
Engagement of Service Provider	321,225
Provision of private financing advice to the Mulwala Redevelopment Project	484,000
Provision of private financing advice to the Mulwala Redevelopment Project	847,000
Total	5,425,465
Defence: 2005-06	
Contract Description	Value (\$)
Implementing Refined Inventory	950
Provision of Management Services	11,000
Development of Defence Materiel Organisation (DMO) Risk Management Plan	21,560
Consultancy Services -review of industry practice re stock tolerance levels	25,502
Commercial Advice	26,070
Materiel Logistics Financial Framework - District Structure - District Realignment Agendum Paper	26,380
SDSS Items 'Not-in-Catalogue' - Project Support	27,500
Professional Services	29,506
Professional Services	30,000
Infrastructure Information Environment (IIE) Business Analysis	31,564
Professional Services	33,000
Evaluation of Boot Proposal	33,809
Professional Services	34,720
Service for SIRIUS ISS	35,200
SDSS IT Controls Stakeholder Engagement	38,010
Professional Services	38,610
SDSS Items 'Not-in-Catalogue' Team Coordinator	38,750
Professional Services - Subject Matter Expert	40,960
SDSS Controls Framework Incident Management	41,100

Contract Description	Value (\$)
Contractor Hire to Write Standard Operating Procedures for Branch	42,000
Professional Services	43,057
Workshop Facilitation	43,300
Improvement Pause	45,001
SDSS - Project Support 'Not-in-Catalogue'	52,250
New Air Combat Capability Audit Services	55,000
Professional Services	59,100
SDSS Items 'Not-in-Catalogue' - Project Support	60,000
Professional Services	62,660
SDSS Items 'Not-in-Catalogue' - Project Support	67,500
Provide Financial Services for the DMO Financial Strategy	68,127
SDSS Controls Framework Self Assessment Coordinator	69,770
Financial Reporting Services	71,200
Professional Services	71,644
Return on Investment Study	75,250
Contractor Services-Enterprise Modeller Support	82,500
SDSS Technical Analysis Framework Issues	84,430
SDSS Controls Framework Self-Assessment Coordinator	88,800
Development of an Internal Quality Assurance Review	92,327
Consulting Services	92,876
SDSS IT Audit Support	101,310
Professional Services	110,000
SDSS IT Controls Stakeholder Engagement	116,030
SDSS Controls Framework Team Coordinator	120,000
Provide Financial Services for the DMO Financial Strategy	122,998
Provision Financial Services Support to Land 121	134,339
SDSS Items 'Not-in-Catalogue' Team Coordinator	147,530
Professional Service Provider	147,840
Professional Service Provider	150,000
Professional Service Provider	157,500
Professional Service Provider	162,950
Professional Service Provider	173,250
Services to Support the Implementation of the SDSS IT Controls Framework	183,374
Professional Service Provider	183,700
Conduct Training in Assets Under Construction and Diligence	185,121
Independent Review of Ellipse Financials	199,764
Professional Service Provider	200,000
Provision Financial Services Support to Land 121	202,355
Professional Services	206,250
Stocktake	220,000
Business Support Consultant	237,825
Contractor Support for General Stores and Specialised Military Equipment Quality Assurance	246,400
Professional Services	262,000
Produce Strategic Business Case for Randwick Disposal & Rationalisation Project -Main Works	264,000
Professional Services	287,500
IIE Business Analysis	308,000
Financial Reporting Services	328,825
Professional Services	339,954
Professional Services	385,000
Legal Services	462,000
IIE Business Analysis	561,000
Professional Services	600,000
Single Leap - Phase 2 Project	643,821
Contract Consultancy	685,740
Information Technology Control Framework	791,507
Professional Services	855,422
SDSS Controls Framework Quality Assurance Review	921,116
Total	13,295,404

Defence: The cost of each contract awarded from 1 July to 30 September 2006 is as follows:

Contract Description	Value (\$)
Professional Service on Finance Executive Leave Balances	6,000
Professional Services	7,508
Professional Services On Single Leap	13,200
Professional Services	17,340
Professional Services	17,340
Professional Fees and Expenses For Provision	21,080
S11 Items 'Not-in-Catalogue' Project Support	23,625
Airborne Early Warning and Control In-service Support Contractor Strategic Financial Analyst	29,300
Assist in the Development and Implementation of Corporate Performance Management and Reporting Framework	30,000
SDSS Items 'Not-in-Catalogue' Project Support	44,250
Risk Assessment	48,430
Consultancy Services	64,510
Professional Services	65,010
Financial Due Diligence Framework	68,995
Professional Services	69,360
Improvement Program Start Up	109,270
Professional Services	140,500
Policy for Automated Information Technology Program Office	144,240
Professional Service Provider in Support of JP2008 Phase 4 for Satellite Communication Financial Options Study	155,650
Explosive Ordnance Services Contract Review	180,000
Consultancy Services for surface-to-air missiles	200,000
Professional Services	250,250
Professional Services	270,002
Total	1,975,860

Defence Housing Authority (DHA):

Following an open tender process undertaken in 2003, the DHA and KPMG entered into a Deed of Standing Offer (DSO) for Internal Audit Services and any out of scope audit services required. The DSO is due to cease on 28 February 2007.

2004-05 - \$555,561.

2005-06 - \$495,564.

The total cost of services provided in 2006-07 is not available at this time. A budget amount of \$375,000 has been approved for currently identified work under the Internal Audit Plan 2006-07.

KPMG Contracts

(Question No. 4061)

Mr Kelvin Thomson asked the Minister representing the Minister for the Environment and Heritage, in writing, on 4 September 2006:

- (1) What contracts, if any, were granted to KPMG by departments or agencies in the Minister's portfolio for the financial years:
 - (a) 2004-05;
 - (b) 2005-06; and
 - (c) 2006-07.
- (2) What is the cost of each contract identified in Part (1).

Mr Truss—The Minister for the Environment and Heritage has provided the following answer to the honourable member's question:

- (1) and (2) The following contracts were awarded to KPMG:

2004-05

Description	Contract Price	Agency
Probity work for online reporting – System Evaluation Process	\$4,400.00	DEH
Supply of Software and advisory services for Fringe Benefit Tax	\$12,280.40	DEH
Development of medium-to-long term asset replacement and employee liability management plans	\$17,475.00	DEH
Project Management of Fringe Benefit Tax Reporting	\$9,515.00	DEH
Purchase of Fringe Benefit Tax software and training	\$2,765.00	DEH

Description	Contract Price	Agency
Internal Audit Services for 2004-2005 for the Australian Greenhouse Office	\$77,000.00	DEH
Probity audit of program documentation and selection processes	\$27,500.00	DEH
Review of Bureau of Meteorology's capacity to fund replacement / refurbishment of 12 field offices from its Asset Replacement Program	\$31,806.58	BOM
2005-06		
Fringe Benefit Tax training	\$2,608.10	DEH
Facilitation of Natural Resource Management Symposium	\$2,420.00	DEH
2006-07		
Analysis of measures to offset the benefits derived and environmental costs incurred from the granting of approvals to vary fuel standards under the Fuel Quality Standards Act 2000	\$89,500	DEH
Assessment of submissions for funding from fishers affected by the re-zoning of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park under the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority Structural Adjustment Package	\$1,011,120.00	DEH

Job Network Providers

(Question No. 4069)

Mr Kelvin Thomson asked the Minister for Workforce Participation, in writing, on 4 September 2006:

- (1) For each of the financial years (a) 2002-03, (b) 2003-04, (c) 2004-05 and (d) 2005-06: how many clients were (i) assisted, and (ii) classified as 'highly disadvantaged', by Job Network providers.
- (2) What additional payment do Job Network providers receive for each client who is classified 'highly disadvantaged'.
- (3) In respect of the classification of clients by Job Network providers as 'highly disadvantaged', (a) upon what basis is it made and (b) what checks are undertaken by the department to ensure that it is accurate.
- (4) Have any Job Network providers been required to repay money received as a result of the erroneous classification of clients as 'highly disadvantaged'; if so, (a) which providers, and (b) what sum did each repay.

Dr Stone—The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

- (1) (a) 2002-03. Not applicable. The category Highly Disadvantaged commenced in July 2003 as part of the Active Participation Model (Employment Services Contract 2003-06).
- (b) 2003-04
 - (i) The total number of referrals to Job Network by Centrelink was 636,020;
 - (ii) The number of highly disadvantaged referrals to Job Network by Centrelink, measured at time of referral, was 70,823;
- (c) 2004-05
 - (i) The total number of referrals to Job Network by Centrelink was 574,780;
 - (ii) The number of highly disadvantaged referrals to Job Network by Centrelink, measured at time of referral, was 93,520;
- (d) 2005-06
 - (i) The total number of referrals to Job Network by Centrelink was 626,127;
 - (ii) The number of highly disadvantaged referrals to Job Network by Centrelink, measured at time of referral, was 79,085.

(2)

Payment type	Standard payment/credit ¹	Payment/ credits including HD supplement ²	Comment
Job Network Service Fee			
Job Search Support Interviews and IS Job Search Support Reviews	\$266	\$398	Included in the quarterly service fee. The amount payable varies depending on how long the job seeker is serviced by the JNM.
Intensive Support Customised Assistance First period	\$834	\$1250	Paid on commencement of services
Intensive Support Customised Assis-	\$495	\$742	Paid on commencement

Payment type	Standard pay- ment/credit ¹	Payment/ credits including HD sup- plement ²	Comment
tance Second period			of services
Job Seeker Account 'notional bank' credits			
Intensive Support Customised Assis- tance First period	\$900	\$1350	Credited on commence- ment
Intensive Support Customised Assis- tance Second period	\$500	\$750	Credited on commence- ment
Intensive Support Outcome payments*			
IS Interim payment (13 weeks)	\$1650	\$3300	Paid after completion of 13 week Interim pay- ment period
IS Final payment (26 weeks)	\$825	\$1650	Paid after completion of 26 weeks Final payment period

1: Amount payable as at 1 July 2006.

2: A service fee or JSKA credit will only include a highly disadvantaged supplement if the job seeker is classified as highly disadvantaged at the time of commencement into assistance. An IS Outcome fee will only be paid at the higher rate if the job seeker is classified as highly disadvantaged at the time of placement into the job or education. Highly disadvantaged Job seekers attract the rate applicable to those who are unemployed two years or longer.

- (3) (a) A job seeker is classified as 'highly disadvantaged' on the basis of their Job Seeker Classification Instrument (JSCI) score. The JSCI is a series of questions that elicit information on the job seeker's personal circumstances. The answers to these questions are assigned weights or points depending on the extent to which they contribute to the job seeker's probability of becoming long term unemployed. These points added together constitute the JSCI score. Job seekers whose score is above a predetermined point are classified as highly disadvantaged. The JSCI is administered to job seekers when they first register with Centrelink or directly with a Job Network member. The JSCI is revised or updated by the Job Network member or by Centrelink at any time during the provision of employment services if the job seeker's circumstances change. Updating the JSCI may or may not alter the JSCI score and as a result the highly disadvantaged status of the job seeker may or may not change.
- (b) The Department has a JSCI Quality Assurance plan in place to assure the accuracy of the JSCI record, including the highly disadvantaged status of the job seeker. This plan comprises a range of assurance activities, including: analysis of the number of updates of JSCI records and the proportion that result in a change in highly disadvantaged status, on the basis of Job Network site and organisation; regular and routine monitoring visits by Departmental staff that incorporate examination of the JSCI record of individual job seekers; and departmental surveys of job seekers to verify the accuracy of the JSCI record.
- (4) Under the Employment Services Contract 2006-2009, employment service providers are required to maintain accurate records. If any employment service provider has claimed Commonwealth funds as a result of inaccurate job seeker records, then in accordance with the Contract the department is obliged to recover funds gained as a result of these inaccuracies. It is not considered appropriate to comment on the affairs of individual service providers.

Community Water Grants

(Question No. 4072)

Mr Kelvin Thomson asked the Minister representing the Minister for the Environment and Heritage, in writing, on 4 September 2006:

In respect of Community Water Grants, (a) how many applications were submitted for the first funding round, (b) of the applications received, how many were successful and (c) in the case of each successful application, what was the purpose of the project.

Mr Truss—The Minister for the Environment and Heritage has provided the following answer to the honourable member's question:

- (a) 4775 applications were submitted for Community Water Grants Round 1.
- (b) 1750 applications were successful for Community Water Grants Round 1.
- (c) Of the successful applications:
- 159 projects improve surface and groundwater health;
 - 514 projects recycle water for use, and
 - 1077 projects save water by installing water efficient devices.

Welfare Fraud
(Question No. 4075)

Mr Kelvin Thomson asked the Minister for Human Services, in writing, on 5 September 2006:

- (1) Is Centrelink testing direct electronic links with banks and insurers to detect undeclared assets and income for the purpose of preventing welfare fraud; if so, (a) what is the cost of this measure and (b) what is the estimated sum of savings that it will deliver to Government.
- (2) Does Centrelink receive electronic employment separation certificates from Woolworths and Coles Myer; if so (a) what is the cost of this measure and (b) what is the estimated sum of savings that it will deliver to Government.

Mr Hockey—The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

- (1) Yes, Centrelink will be testing electronic links with one financial institution and one insurer in the next six months.
 - (a) The estimated investment for data links with financial institutions is \$944,000 and the savings to Government are estimated at \$18.1 million over the next two financial years.
 - (b) The estimated investment for data exchange with insurers is \$446,575 and the savings to Government are estimated at \$3.6 million over the next two financial years.
- (2) Woolworths, but not Coles Myer, is a part of a Centrelink trial with employers who submit employment separation certificates.
 - (a) The cost of this project is \$143,000.
 - (b) This project is not a savings measure.

To prepare this answer it has taken approximately 3 hours and 50 minutes at an estimated cost of \$214.