THIRTY-SIXTH PARLIAMENT
FIRST SESSION—SIXTH PERIOD

Governor-General

His Excellency the Honourable William George Hayden, Companion of the Order of Australia, Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia

House of Representatives Officeholders

Speaker—The Honourable Leo Boyce McLeay
Chairman of Committees—Mr Ronald Frederick Edwards
Deputy Chairmen of Committees—The Honourable James Donald Mathieson Dobie, Mr Stephen Cairfield Dubois, Mr Colin Hollis, Mr Henry Alfred Jenkins, the Honourable Michael John Randal MacKellar, Mr Garry Barr Nehl, the Honourable Gordon Glen Denton Scholes, Mr Leslie James Scott, Mrs Kathryn Jean Sullivan and Mr Warren Errol Truss
Leader of the House—The Honourable Kim Christian Beazley
Leader of the Opposition—Dr John Robert Hewson
Deputy Leader of the Opposition—Mr Peter Keaston Reith
Manager of Opposition Business—Mr Warwick Leslie Smith

House of Representatives Party Leaders

Leader of the Australian Labor Party—The Honourable Paul John Keating
Deputy Leader of the Australian Labor Party—The Honourable Brian Leslie Howe
Leader of the Liberal Party of Australia—Dr John Robert Hewson
Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party of Australia—Mr Peter Keaston Reith
Leader of the National Party of Australia—Mr Timothy Andrew Fischer
Deputy Leader of the National Party of Australia—Mr Bruce Lloyd
## Members of the House of Representatives

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<th>Member</th>
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<tr>
<td>Aldred, Kenneth James</td>
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<td>Anderson, John Duncan</td>
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<td>Bailey, Frances Esther</td>
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<td>Beale, Julian Howard Christian</td>
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**PARTY ABBREVIATIONS**

ALP—Australian Labor Party; LP—Liberal Party of Australia; NP—National Party of Australia; Ind.—Independent
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<tr>
<td>Prime Minister</td>
<td>The Honourable Paul John Keating</td>
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<tr>
<td>Deputy Prime Minister, Minister for Health, Housing and Community Services, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Social Justice and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Commonwealth-State Relations</td>
<td>The Honourable Brian Leslie Howe</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leader of the Government in the Senate and Minister for Industry, Technology and Commerce</td>
<td>Senator the Honourable John Norman Button</td>
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<tr>
<td>Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade</td>
<td>Senator the Honourable Gareth John Evans, QC</td>
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<tr>
<td>Treasurer</td>
<td>The Honourable John Sydney Dawkins</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Finance and Vice-President of the Executive Council</td>
<td>The Honourable Ralph Willis</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attorney-General</td>
<td>The Honourable Michael John Duffy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Employment, Education and Training and Leader of the House</td>
<td>The Honourable Kim Christian Beazley</td>
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<td>Minister for Social Security</td>
<td>The Honourable Neal Blewett</td>
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<td>Minister for Defence</td>
<td>Senator the Honourable Robert Francis Ray</td>
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<td>Minister for Immigration, Local Government and Ethnic Affairs and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Multicultural Affairs</td>
<td>The Honourable Gerard Leslie Hand</td>
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<td>Minister for the Arts, Sport, the Environment and Territories</td>
<td>The Honourable Roslyn Joan Kelly</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Industrial Relations and Minister for Shipping and Aviation Support and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Public Service Matters</td>
<td>Senator the Honourable Peter Francis Salmon Cook</td>
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<td>Minister for Administrative Services</td>
<td>Senator the Honourable Nick Bolkus</td>
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<td>Minister for Primary Industries and Energy</td>
<td>The Honourable Simon Findlay Crean</td>
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<td>Minister for Tourism and Minister for Resources</td>
<td>The Honourable Alan Gordon Griffiths</td>
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<td>Minister for Transport and Communications</td>
<td>Senator the Honourable Robert Lindsay Collins</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Veterans’ Affairs and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Northern Australia</td>
<td>The Honourable Benjamin Charles Humphreys</td>
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(The above Ministers constitute the Cabinet)
Keating Ministry—continued

Minister for Trade and Overseas Development
The Honourable John Charles Kerin

Minister for Justice and Minister Assisting the
Minister for Immigration, Local Government
and Ethnic Affairs
Senator the Honourable Michael Carter Tate

Minister for Aged, Family and Health Services
The Honourable Peter Richard Staples

Minister for Land Transport
The Honourable Robert James Brown

Minister for Family Support and Minister for
Local Government
The Honourable David William Simmons

Minister for Higher Education and Employ-
ment Services and Minister Assisting the
Treasurer
The Honourable Peter Jeremy Baldwin

Minister for Small Business, Construction and
Customs
The Honourable David Peter Beddall

Minister for Defence Science and Personnel
The Honourable Gordon Neil Bilney

Minister for the Arts and Territories and
Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the
Status of Women
The Honourable Wendy Frances Fatin

Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait
Islander Affairs and Minister Assisting the
Prime Minister for Aboriginal Reconciliation
The Honourable Robert Edward Tickner

Minister for Science and Technology and
Minister Assisting the Prime Minister
The Honourable Ross Vincent Free

Minister for Consumer Affairs
The Honourable Jeannette McHugh

Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister
The Honourable Laurence John Brereton

Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for
Health, Housing and Community Services
The Honourable Gary Thomas Johns

Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for
Foreign Affairs and Trade
The Honourable Stephen Paul Martin

Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasurer and
Manager of Government Business in the
Senate
Senator the Honourable Robert Francis
McMullan

Parliamentary Secretary to the Attorney-
General
The Honourable Peter Duncan

Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for
Employment, Education and Training
The Honourable Warren Edward Snowdon

Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for
Social Security
The Honourable Con Sciacca

Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for
Defence
The Honourable Leo Roger Spurway Price
THE COMMITTEES OF THE SESSION

FIRST SESSION: SIXTH PERIOD

STANDING COMMITTEES

ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER AFFAIRS—Mr Kerr (Chairman), Mr Anderson, Mrs Darling, Mr Gibson, Mr Lavarch, Mr Nugent, Mr Riggall, Mr Ronaldson, Mr Les Scott, Mr Snowdon.

BANKING, FINANCE AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION—Mr Elliott (Chairman), Mr Andrew, Mr Braithwaite, Dr Charlesworth, Mr Courtice, Mr Downer, Mr Dubois, Mr Ronald Edwards, Mr Gear, Mr Steele Hall, Mr Les Scott, Mr Wilson.

COMMUNITY AFFAIRS—Mr Jenkins (Chairman), Mrs Bradford, Mr Broadbent, Dr Catley, Mr Cowan, Mrs Crosio, Mr Elliott, Mrs Gallus, Mr Goodluck, Mrs Jakobsen, Mr O’Keefe, Mr Walker.

EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION AND TRAINING—Ms Crawford (Chairman), Mr Atkinson, Mr Bevis, Mr Bradford, Mr Braithwaite, Mr Charles, Mr Elliott, Mr Gibson, Mrs Jakobsen, Mr Barry Jones, Mr Riggall, Mr Sawford.

ENVIRONMENT, RECREATION AND THE ARTS—Mr Langmore (Chairman), Mr Dobie, Mr Dubois, Mr Ronald Edwards, Mr Peter Fisher, Mrs Gallus, Mr Gear, Mr Jenkins, Mr Newell, Mr John Scott, Mr Truss, Mr Webster.

HOUSE—The Speaker, Mr Elliott, Mr Fitzgibbon, Mr Hollis, Mr MacKellar, Mr Nehl, Mrs Sullivan.

INDUSTRY, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY—Mr Lee (Chairman), Mr Campbell, Mr Cobb, Mr Ferguson, Mr Ford, Mr Grace, Mr Jenkins, Mr Barry Jones, Mr McArthur, Mr Nugent, Mr Reid, Mr Les Scott.

LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS—Mr Lavarch (Chairman), Mr Andrews, Mr Cadman, Mrs Crosio, Mr Holding, Mr Kerr, Mr Melham, Mr Ronaldson, Mr Scholes, Mr Sinclair, Mr Wright. Mr Nehl and Mr Snow to serve on the Committee during consideration of the inquiry into the legal regimes of Australia’s external territories and the Territory of Jervis Bay.

LIBRARY—The Speaker, Mrs Bailey, Mr Fitzgibbon, Mr Hollis, Mr Barry Jones, Mr Ronaldson, Mr Truss.

LONG TERM STRATEGIES—Mr Barry Jones (Chairman), Mr Andrews, Mr Atkinson, Mr Bevis, Mr Broadbent, Dr Catley, Mr Dobie, Mr Ferguson, Mr Johns, Mr Allan Morris, Mr Nehl, Mr Snow.

MEMBERS’ INTERESTS—Mr Dubois (Chairman), Mr Connolly, Mr Cowan, Mr Lindsay, Mr O’Neil, Mr Ruddock, Mr John Scott.

PRIVILEGES—Mr Gear (Chairman), the Leader of the House or his nominee, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition or his nominee, Mr Andrews, Mr Costello, Mrs Crosio, Dr Harry Edwards, Mr Johns, Mr McGauran, Mr Snow, Mr Snowdon.

PROCEDURE—Mr Scholes (Chairman), Mr Charles, Mr Ronald Edwards, Mr Grace, Mr Hollis, Mrs Sullivan, Mr Truss, Mr Walker.

PUBLICATIONS—Mr Gorman (Chairman), Dr Harry Edwards, Mr Filing, Mr Peter Fisher, Mr Fitzgibbon, Mr Gear, Mr Gibson.

SELECTION—Mr Ronald Edwards (Chairman), Mr Andrew, Mr Gear, Mr Grace, Mr Halverson, Mr Hicks, Mr Hollis, Mr Kerr, Mr Langmore, Mr Nehl, Mr Reid.

TELEVISING OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES—The Speaker (Chairman), Mrs Darling, Mr Ronald Edwards, Mr Hicks, Mr Jull, Mr Les Scott.
TRANSPORT, COMMUNICATIONS AND INFRASTRUCTURE—Mr Peter Morris (Chairman), Mr Anderson, Mr Cadman, Mr Ewen Cameron, Mr Campbell, Mr Elliott, Mr Gorman, Mr Hawker, Mr Hollis, Mr Mack, Mr John Scott, Mr Harry Woods.

JOINT STATUTORY COMMITTEES

AUSTRALIAN SECURITY INTELLIGENCE ORGANIZATION—Mr Wright (Presiding Member), Mr Gibson, Mrs Jakobsen, Mr McGauran, Senator Coulter, Senator Lewis, Senator Zakharov.

BROADCASTING OF PARLIAMENTARY PROCEEDINGS—The Speaker (Chairman), the President, Mrs Darling, Mr Ronald Edwards, Mr Hicks, Mr Jull, Mr Les Scott, Senator Coates, Senator Vanstone.

CORPORATIONS AND SECURITIES—Senator Beahan (Chairman), Mrs Crosio, Mr Ford, Mr Kerr, Mr Moore, Mr Punch, Senator Campbell, Senator Cooney, Senator Lewis, Senator Spindler.

NATIONAL CRIME AUTHORITY—Mr Lindsay (Chairman), Mr Filing, Mr Melham, Mr O'Keefe, Mr Sinclair, Senator Crichton-Browne, Senator Jones, Senator Loosley, Senator Spindler, Senator Vanstone.

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS—Mr Punch (Chairman), Mr Aldred, Mrs Crosio, Mr Fitzgibbon, Mr Kerr, Mr Langmore, Mr Nehl, Mr Les Scott, Mr Shack, Mr Somlyay, Senator Aulich, Senator Bishop, Senator Giles, Senator Reynolds, Senator Watson.

PUBLIC WORKS—Mr Hollis (Chairman), Mr Ewen Cameron, Mr Gorman, Mr O'Neil, Mr Bruce Scott, Mr Taylor, Senator Burns, Senator Calvert, Senator Devereux.

JOINT COMMITTEES

FOREIGN AFFAIRS, DEFENCE AND TRADE—Senator Schacht (Chairman), Mr Atkinson, Mr Bevis, Mr Dubois, Dr Harry Edwards, Mr Ferguson, Mr Fitzgibbon, Mr Grace, Mr Halverson, Mr Hicks, Mr Hollis, Mr Langmore, Mr Lee, Mr Lindsay, Mr MacKellar, Mr Moore, Mr John Scott, Mr Sinclair, Mr Taylor, Dr Theophanous, Senator Beahan, Senator Bourne, Senator Brownhill, Senator Chamarette, Senator Chapman, Senator Childs, Senator Crichton-Browne, Senator Jones, Senator MacGibbon, Senator Maguire.

NATIONAL CAPITAL—Mr Langmore (Chairman), Mr Elliott, Mr Halverson, Mr Scholes, Mr Sharp, Senator Aulich, Senator Macdonald, Senator Reid, Senator Sowada, Senator West.

JOINT STANDING COMMITTEES

ELECTORAL MATTERS—Mr Bevis (Chairman), Dr Catley, Mr Cobb, Mr Melham, Mr Miles, Senator Beahan, Senator Chamarette, Senator Faulkner, Senator Kemp, Senator Kernot.

MIGRATION REGULATIONS—Dr Theophanous (Chairman), Dr Catley, Mr Holding, Mr Ruddock, Mr Sinclair, Mrs Sullivan, Senator Cooney, Senator Lewis, Senator McKiernan.

PARLIAMENTARY ZONE—The Speaker and The President (Joint Chairmen), Mr Dobie, Mr Halverson, Mr Holding, Mr Hollis, Mr Lee, Senator Archer, Senator Coates, Senator Colston, Senator Reid, Senator Sowada.

JOINT SELECT COMMITTEES

CERTAIN ASPECTS OF THE operation and interpretation of the FAMILY LAW ACT—Senator McKiernan (Chairman), Mr Gorman, Mrs Jakobsen, Mr Lavarch, Mr Peacock, Mr Webster, Senator Brownhill, Senator Crowley, Senator Reid, Senator Spindler.
PARLIAMENTARY DEPARTMENTS

SENATE
Clerk of the Senate—H. Evans
Deputy Clerk of the Senate—A. Lynch
Acting Clerk Assistant (Table)—T. J. Brown
Clerk Assistant (Corporate Management)—J. Vander Wyk
Clerk Assistant (Procedure)—C. J. C. Elliott
Clerk Assistant (Committees)—P. O’Keeffe
Usher of the Black Rod—R. Alison

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Clerk of the House—L. M. Barlin
Acting Deputy Clerk of the House—I. C. Harris
Acting First Clerk Assistant—B. C. Wright
Clerk Assistant (Procedure)—I. C. Cochran
First Assistant Secretary (Committees and Corporate Services)—M. W. Salkeld
Clerk Assistant (Table)—J. W. Pender
Serjeant-at-Arms—P. Bergin

PARLIAMENTARY REPORTING STAFF
Principal Parliamentary Reporter—J. W. Templeton
Chief Hansard Reporter—B. A. Harris
Assistant Chief Reporter (House of Representatives)—V. M. Barrett
Assistant Chief Reporter (Senate)—M. A. R. McGregor

LIBRARY
Parliamentary Librarian—

JOINT HOUSE
Secretary—M. W. Bolton
Mr SPEAKER (Hon. Leo McLeay) took the chair at 9.30 a.m., and read prayers.

PETITIONS

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

Television Programs

To the Honourable the Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives in Parliament assembled, this petition from concerned parents and consumers respectfully requests that the Broadcasting Services Bill which will control Television and Pay Television, will:

- prohibit all considerably violent programs,
- prohibit indecent and obscene programs, (to protect the young and impressionable),
- prohibit blasphemous programs which denigrate religious faith or belief,
- establish strict, legally enforceable Standards for programs and hours,
- ensure that “nothing is included that will offend against good taste or decency”,
- ensure that films are judged not as a whole, but each in its several parts,
- that the Bill underpins and supports pro-social media in spirit and intent,
- reject industry Codes that will sell-out Australia’s defenceless children,
- exempt all classification criteria and hours from s149(d),
- ensure genuine consumer consultation, so that parents can have access to Program criteria information, and input into decision-making for their home environment.

Because children are defenceless and helpless, they have no vote, no power, and no advocate other than you.

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

by Mr Andrew (from 482 citizens),
Mr Andrews (from 121 citizens),
Mrs Bailey (from 16 citizens),
Mr Beazley (from 307 citizens),
Dr Blewett (from 40 citizens),
Mr Broadbent (from 39 citizens),
Mr Campbell (from 120 citizens),
Mr Chaney (from 65 citizens),
Mr Connolly (from 15 citizens),
Ms Crawford (from 108 citizens),
Mr Dobie (from 20 citizens),
Mr Downer (from 155 citizens),
Mr Dubois (from 36 citizens),
Ms Fatin (from 57 citizens),
Mr Ford (from 63 citizens),
Mr Free (from 36 citizens),
Mr Gear (from 55 citizens),
Mr Steele Hall (from 65 citizens),
Mr Halverson (from 39 citizens),
Mr Howard (from 91 citizens),
Mrs Jakobsen (from 20 citizens),
Mr Johns (from 42 citizens),
Dr Kemp (from 40 citizens),
Mr Kerin (from 16 citizens),
Mr Mack (from 52 citizens),
Mr MacKellar (from 85 citizens),
Mr Nugent (from 141 citizens),
Mr O’Keefe (from 533 citizens),
Mr Reith (from 25 citizens),
Mr Shack (from 68 citizens),
Mr Smith (from 8,982 citizens),
Mr Tickner (from 20 citizens),
Mr Tuckey (from 20 citizens),
Mr Willis (from 41 citizens),
Mr Wilson (from 20 citizens) and
Dr Bob Woods (from 23 citizens).

National Flag

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

The Petition of the undersigned respectfully sheweth that:

1. We the undersigned wish to signify our strong opposition to any change in the design or colour of the Australian National Flag.

2. We believe that the current flag has served Australia well and will continue to do so in the future and represents a true manifestation of the Nation’s history.

And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.
National Flag

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

The petition of the undersigned citizens of Australia respectfully showeth that:

1. The majority of Australians are completely satisfied with the existing Australian national flag.
2. We therefore request that the House of Representatives ensures that the Australian national flag, as provided in Section (3) of the Flags Act, is not changed or replaced without first being voted upon and approved by the people of Australia in a national poll.

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

by Mrs Bailey (from 154 citizens),
Mr Beddall (from 404 citizens),
Ms Crawford (from 110 citizens),
Mr Dubois (from 380 citizens),
Mr Filing (from 262 citizens),
Mr Tim Fischer (from 5,007 citizens),
Mr Ford (from 44 citizens),
Mr Halverson (from 463 citizens),
Mr Hicks (from 22 citizens),
Mr Holding (from 158 citizens),
Mr Jull (from 112 citizens),
Mr Lloyd (from 357 citizens),
Mr McArthur (from 17 citizens),
Mr MacKellar (from 626 citizens),
Mr Peter Morris (from 30 citizens),
Ms Sullivan (from 21 citizens),
Mr Taylor (from 1,083 citizens),
Mr Truss (from 809 citizens) and
Mr Tuckey (from 631 citizens).

Rights of Independent Contractors

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

The Petition of the undersigned citizens of Australia respectfully showeth that:

by Mr Andrew (from 1,749 citizens),
Mr Andrews (from 193 citizens),
Mr Carlton (from 312 citizens),
Mr Chaney (from 68 citizens),
Mr Charles (from 1,730 citizens),
Mr Connolly (from 49 citizens),
Mr Fife (from 211 citizens),
Mr Filing (from 94 citizens),
Mr Ford (from 20 citizens),
Mr Jull (from 373 citizens),
Mr McArthur (from 833 citizens),
Mr Reid (from 1,849 citizens),
Mr Ronaldson (from 1,976 citizens),
Mr Ruddock (from 19 citizens),
Mr Somlyay (from 93 citizens) and
Mr Taylor (from 160 citizens).
1. The majority of Australians believe that independent contractors play a vital role in keeping Australia internationally competitive.

2. We therefore request that the House of Representatives gives every consideration to protecting the current rights of independent contractors.

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

by Mr Broadbent (from 83 citizens),
Mr Ford (from 12 citizens) and
Mr McArthur (from 85 citizens).

Mr Webster (from 627 citizens).

**National Flag**

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

The humble petition of the undersigned citizens of Australia showeth that whereas:

(1) They are completely satisfied with the design of the existing Australian National Flag.

(2) They are aware it properly reflects the immutable characteristics of Australia, namely:

(a) The Union Jack, itself the creation of three Christian crosses, representing the nation’s historical origin and the source of its language and law;

(b) The Southern Cross on an azure blue background signifying its geographical location on this planet Earth;

(c) The large star depicting the advent of Federation in 1901.

(3) They know the Flag has been a source of inspiration to generations of Australians in peace and war.

(4) They recall that millions of native-born Australians and newcomers to these shores from other parts of the world have become united under its proud symbolism.

(5) They are certain that any change to the Flag will produce division in the Australian community.

Your petitioners therefore pray that your honourable House will:

Propose and pass a motion that the existing Australian National Flag not be changed except with the consent and approval of the Australian people as expressed in a referendum.

And your petitioners as in duty bound will ever pray.

by Mr Halverson (from 75 citizens).

**Refugees Held at Port Hedland**

To the Honourable the Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives in Parliament assembled, the humble undersigned citizens earnestly pray, that because of the uncertain situation existing in Vietnam and Cambodia it could be cruel and unjust to repatriate those presently held in detention in Port Hedland and other places, who are rejected as being “refugees”.

That they be given the alternate status of "Domestic Temporary Resident" for a period of two years.

by Mr Halverson (from 148 citizens),
Mr Ronaldson (from 86 citizens) and
That such a status be granted if sponsored by other Australian individuals or groups, with the guarantee of housing these people for the term of their temporary residency.

That those who are granted such a status be allowed to move freely about the Country, accept work and do skills training.

Your petitioners as in duty bound will ever pray.

by Mr Andrew (from 30 citizens) and
Mr Hand (from 530 citizens).

Abortion: Government Funding
To the Honourable the Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives in Parliament assembled.
The humble petition of the undersigned Australian citizens shows that:

Every abortion kills an unborn human baby. More unborn Australians are killed every year (80,000) than the Australian death toll for the whole of World War II (30,000).

Australia’s population is aging. Our live birth rate is below replacement level.

About 98 percent of abortions in Australia are performed for non-medical reasons (see SA Health Commission statistics).

Post abortion depression is a silent epidemic and is linked with the growing incidence of child abuse by mothers who have previously had abortions.

The Australian Government should not fund the killing of future Australian citizens.

Mothers with problem pregnancies need positive help to carry their babies to full term.

Your petitioners therefore pray that your Honourable House will:

pass the Abortion Funding Abolition Bill 1990, and
help pregnant women with problems to continue their pregnancies.

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

by Mr Andrew (from 22 citizens) and
Mr Webster (from 260 citizens).

Registered Publications Service
To the Honourable the Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives assembled in Parliament:
The Petition of the undersigned residents of Australia draws to the attention of the House the precarious position of Australia’s independent magazine publishers due to the recent decision by Australia Post to abolish the Registered Publications scheme and cause a rise of between 78.5% and 223.5% in postal charges (depending on weight and destination) for subscriber magazines over an 18 month period. For example, to mail a 300g magazine cost 47 cents in August 1990 under the Registered Publications scheme. It now costs up to $1.52.

Your petitioners pray that the House, as a matter of urgency:

(a) Takes action to ensure that the registered publications service is saved.
(b) Ensures that such discriminatory eligibility criteria for registered publications as cover price ceilings are forbidden, placing all Australian magazines on an equal footing.
(c) Removes the constant threat of crippling price rises from the independent publishing industry by ensuring that postal rate increases for magazines are set at 50% of the consumer price index commencing retrospectively at January 1, 1990.
(d) Takes action to ban discriminatory price loadings for interstate and country subscribers, giving all Australians equal access to magazines.
(e) Protects diversity of media ownership in Australia as a mainstay of our democracy by legislating the maintenance of the registered publications service as a community service obligation of Australia Post.
(f) Ensures that all future decisions affecting the carriage of magazines by Australia Post are made in conjunction with a publishing industry committee representing both non-profit and independent publishers to ensure that the best features of both registered publications and print post are maintained.

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

by Mr Robert Brown (from 111 citizens) and
Mr Halverson (from 43 citizens).

National Flag
To the Honourable the Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives in Parliament assembled:
The petition of the undersigned citizens of Australia respectfully showeth that:

1. The majority of Australians are completely satisfied with the existing Australian national flag.
2. We therefore request that the House of Representatives ensures that the Australian national flag, as provided in Section (3) of the Flags Act, is not changed or replaced without first being voted upon and approved by the people of Australia in a national referendum.
And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

by Mr Peter Fisher (from 119 citizens) and

Mr Ronaldson (from 183 citizens).

Medicare: Abortions

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

The petition of certain residents of the State of Victoria draws to the attention of the House:

That about 28,000 unborn babies are being killed in Victoria annually, and that a total of about 750,000 have been killed in Australia since abortion item 6469 became part of the Medicare benefits schedule in 1975.

Most abortions are performed on healthy unborn babies for reasons of convenience and most of the procedures are funded by the Australian taxpayer through Medicare.

Your petitioners therefore ask the house to terminate Medicare funding of abortion in Australia by supporting the Abortion Funding Bill of 1990.

by Mr Ford (from 77 citizens) and

Mr Reith (from nine citizens).

National Flag

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

The petition of certain residents of the State of Queensland draws to the attention of the House the overwhelming support for the retention of the existing Australian National flag.

Your petitioners therefore request the House to reject any proposal to change the Australian flag.

by Mr Lindsay (from 26 citizens) and

Mr Bruce Scott (from 250 citizens).

National Flag

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

The petition of the citizens of Australia draws to the attention of the House the current situation whereby the Prime Minister of Australia advocates a change to the Australian Flag.

Your petitioners therefore pray that the House should take action to ensure that the Australian Flag remains unchanged until the matter is taken to the people of Australia by referendum.

by Mr Broadbent (from 797 citizens).

Refugees Held at Port Hedland

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

the undersigned citizens humbly and earnestly pray,

that due to the uncertain situation existing in much of south East Asia including Cambodia and the need for a public review of Australia’s procedures and criteria for granting asylum, it would be unjust and premature to repatriate those presently held in detention in Port Hedland and other places, who have been denied refugee status.

We ask that they be given the alternate status of “Domestic Protection (Temporary) Entry Permit” on humanitarian grounds.

That those who are granted such a status be allowed to move freely about the Country, accept work and do skills training.

Your petitioners as in duty bound will ever pray.

by Mr Beazley (from 28 citizens).

National Flag

To the honourable the Speaker and members of the House of Representatives assembled in Parliament:

The petition of the citizens of Australia draws to the attention of the House the current situation whereby the Prime Minister of Australia advocates a change to the Australian Flag.

Your petitioners therefore pray that the House should take action to ensure that the Australian Flag remains unchanged until the matter is taken to the people of Australia by referendum.

by Mr Beazley (from 28 citizens).

National Flag

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

The petition of certain residents of the State of South Australia draws to the attention of the House our strongest objection to any attempt to alter Australia’s existing national flag without seeking prior approval from the Australian people by way of referendum.

The Australian National Flag has been the symbol of the Australian nation and of our national unity for over eighty years. Throughout history men and women have expressed their feelings for their country by showing honour and respect for their country’s national flag.

This flag must remain our emblem as a tribute to those who laid down their lives for our freedom.

Your petitioners therefore respectfully ask the House of Representatives to preserve our current Australian national flag as a symbol of our national pride and identity.

by Mr Downer (from 5,988 citizens).

National Flag

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

The petition of the undersigned citizens of Australia respectfully showeth that:
1. The majority of Australians are completely satisfied with the existing Australian national flag.

2. We therefore request that the House of Representatives ensures that the Australian national flag, as provided in Section (3) of the Flags Act, is not changed or replaced without first being voted upon and approved by the people of Australia in a national poll.

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

by Mr Fife (from 31 citizens).

National Flag

To the Honourable The Speaker and members of the House of Representatives of the Parliament of Australia in Parliament assembled—

We, the undermentioned petitioners, urge Members of the Parliament of Australia to oppose any alteration to or replacement of the existing Australian National Flag.

Your petitioners humbly pray that you will give this matter earnest consideration and your petitioners as in duty bound will ever humbly pray.

by Mr Filing (from 18 citizens).

National Flag

From the people of Deniliquin New South Wales to the Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives in Parliament assembled the undersigned petitioners respectfully urge members of the House to allow no change to the Australian flag while there is an unacceptable level of unemployment in Australia.

by Mr Tim Fischer (from 2,392 citizens).

Postal Services: Culcairn

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

The petition of certain residents of the Shire of Culcairn in the State of New South Wales draws to the attention of the House the concerns of the undersigned regarding the proposed changes to the level of service provided by or on behalf of Australia Post affecting country areas and in particular the impact on the residents of the Shire of Culcairn. The undersigned believe that it is the right of all citizens to have access to basic services, including postal communication.

Australia Post's Charter, as stated in its 1991 Annual Report, requires it to "Ensure that the postal service is reasonably accessible to all people living in Australia on an equitable basis.

Your petitioners therefore pray that the House take all necessary steps to ensure the retention of all existing postal services, including home delivery.

by Mr Tim Fischer (from 1,181 citizens).

Recession and Foreign Debt

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

The petition of certain citizens of Australia, draws the attention of the House, that the recession and foreign debt results from Federal Government action to reduce exports and increase imports, commencing in December 1972 with the revaluation upwards of the Australian dollar and the reduction downwards of duties on imported goods and continuing to the present day with poor export incentives, an obsolete taxation collecting system and with the Australian dollar now being over-valued by extremely high interest rates being set.

Your petitioners therefore pray that the House:

(1) Restores buying power to Australians by achieving a zero foreign debt with the Pawnbroker Tax and Trade System (or similar). The Pawnbroker System would abolish every method of collecting tax and instead tax all bank and finance house transactions at the rate of 3%. In the very first instance, to clear the foreign debt, the 3% rate would be split into two rates: 1% on all payments within Australia and 140% on all payments going out of Australia.

(2) Restores full employment to Australia by ensuring the Reserve Bank of Australia never again sets interest rates above those of the strong economies such as Japan, Germany and Austria.

by Mr Tim Fischer (from 45 citizens).

Fuel Price Fluctuation

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

The petition of certain residents of the State of Victoria draws the attention of the House to eliminate unnecessary fluctuation in the price of fuel particularly LPG.

Your petitioners therefore pray that the House establish an effective body to maintain the price of these fuels.

by Mr Ford (from 349 citizens).

National Flag

To the Honourable the Speaker and members of the House of Representatives in Parliament:

The humble petition of the undersigned citizens of Australia sheweth that whereas:

(1) They are completely satisfied with the design of the existing Australian National Flag.
(2) They are aware it properly reflects the immutable characteristics of Australia, namely:

(a) The Union Jack, itself the creation of three Christian crosses, represents the nation's historical origin and the source of its language and law;

(b) The Southern Cross on an azure blue background signifying its geographical location on this planet Earth;

(c) The large star depicting the advent of Federation in 1901.

(3) They know the Flag has been a source of inspiration to generations of Australians in peace and war.

(4) They recall that millions of native-born Australians and newcomers to these shores from other parts of the world have become united under its proud symbolism.

(5) They are certain that any change to the Flag will produce division in the Australian community.

Your petitioners therefore pray that your honourable House will:

Give a speedy passage to the Flags Act Amendment Bill which provides that the Australian National Flag can only be changed by a Referendum.

And your petitioners as in duty bound will ever pray.

by Mr Halverson (from 31 citizens).

Motorcycle Helmets

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

The humble petition of the undersigned citizens respectfully showeth:

That your petitioners request that;

If as stated by the Federal Office of Road Safety and Federal Office of Transport and Communication, motorcyclists are supposedly 17 times more likely to be involved in an accident, why have we not had a media campaign to advise other road users of our vulnerability and could we assume motorcycling will receive some form of a media awareness campaign.

To implement 5/25.

With over five years riding experience and over twenty five years of age, the motorcyclist is responsible to choose if he/she should wear a helmet. The National Road Trauma Advisory Council's Terms of Reference (4e) "to promote community awareness and understanding of issues and stimulate public discussion and debate" this was not adherent in the issue of the ADR 19.01 lights on, to which we strongly object. To understand motorcycling, not as a sport or hobby but also a LIFE STYLE.

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

by Mr Hawker (from 66 citizens).

Restraint on Banking Industry

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

The petition of the undersigned citizens of Australia, draws the attention of the House to the hardship being inflicted by the action of the Banking Industry in the foreclosure and forced sales of rural properties and small businesses.

Your petitioners therefore, ask the House to consider the possibility of exercising some restraint over the Banking Industry. Ideally we would like to see a Moratorium over forced property sales, or failing that, the introduction of long term, low interest loans, as has been done in the housing industry.

We also see the need for some definitely stated policy for rural loans, and some independent arbitrator to oversee the application of such policy.

by Mr Hicks (from 1,096 citizens).

National Flag

To the Honourable the Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives assembled in Parliament; the Petition of the undersigned citizens of Australia draws to the attention of the House that:
the majority of Australians are completely satisfied with the existing Australian national flag.

Your petitioners therefore pray that the House ensures that the Australian national flag, as provided in Section (3) of the Flags Act, is not changed or replaced without first being voted upon and approved by the majority of people in Australia in a national poll.

by Mr Howard (from 195 citizens).

National Flag
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, their concern about the reported plans to change the Australian flag and to remove the Union Jack without asking the people of Australia what they want.

Your Petitioners therefore ask the House to oppose any attempts to change the Australian flag without first holding a referendum to find out whether Australian citizens want such a change.

by Mr Howard (from 22 citizens).

Sales Tax Exemptions
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 discriminatory practice exists concerning exemption from payment of Sales Tax for disabled persons when purchasing a new private motor vehicle. The necessity to use a private motor vehicle is identical for all disabled persons unable to use public transport irrespective of employment status and Sales Tax exemption should not be dependent upon the qualification relating to gainful employment.

Your petitioners therefore pray that the House take urgent action to amend the Sales Tax legislation to provide Sales Tax exemption to all disabled persons legally resident in Australia who are unable to use public transport without the requirement to qualify in respect to gainful employment.

by Mr Humphreys (from 46 citizens).

Oath or Affirmation of Allegiance
To the Honourable the Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives in Parliament assembled:

The Petition of the undersigned citizens and residents of Australia respectfully shows:

That the current Oath/Affirmation of Allegiance made by prospective citizens of Australia pledges allegiance to Her Majesty, Elizabeth II, Queen of Australia, Her Heirs and Successors.

Your Petitioners pray that the House of Representatives in Parliament assembled, should:

Legislate to change the Australian Citizenship Oath/Affirmation of Allegiance to a Pledge of Allegiance to Australia and the people of Australia, to reflect the true nature of Australian Government and society.

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

by Mr Sharp (from 80 citizens).
National Flag
To the Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives assembled.

We the undersigned draw to the attention of the Senate:

'Tamworth Legacy Widows’ Social Club would like to protest most strongly at any change to our NATIONAL FLAG.

Our husband’s not only fought, but died under this flag.
Since the Boer War our men have allied under this banner. In every conflict since. Firstly for our British heritage then national pride in our own country, Australia.

Not under any circumstances whatsoever should our wonderful flag be changed in any way.

A referendum should be held Australia wide before anything is done.

And your petitioners in duty bound will ever pray.

by Mr Sinclair (from 99 citizens).

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

The Petition of certain electors of the Division of Eden Monaro points out to the House that Austudy entitlements are unfair to the parents of tertiary students.

Your petitioners therefore ask the House to adjust the parental income threshold entitlement to Austudy so that it is the same as the entitlement to family allowance.

Your petitioners also ask the House to grant a non means tested base allowance and travel allowance for tertiary students who leave their local area to study.

Your petitioners also ask the House to reduce the dependant age of students to 21.

by Mr Snow (from 645 citizens).

SBS Television: Sunshine Coast
To the honourable the Speaker and members of the House of Representatives assembled in Parliament:

The petition of citizens of the Sunshine Coast, electors of the Division of Fairfax, draws to the attention of the House the lack of access to the Special Broadcasting Service (SBS—Channel 28) by Sunshine Coast residents. As Australian taxpayers contributing to the funding of SBS, we believe it our democratic right to have access to SBS.

Your petitioners therefore pray that the House of Representatives in Parliament assembled establish local transmission facilities to receive and locally transmit the Special Broadcasting Service (SBS—Channel 28) to the Sunshine Coast Region.

by Mr Somlyay (from 1,112 citizens).

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

The petition of the undersigned citizens of Australia respectfully showeth that most Australians do not want foreigners from Japan to be allowed to take jobs that should morally and rightfully be done by Australians.

Your petitioners therefore ask that the Honourable the Minister for Immigration and the Honourable the Minister for Tourism be advised and instructed that such visas must not and will not be issued.

by Mr Somlyay (from 550 citizens).

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

This humble petition of the undersigned citizens of Australia respectfully showeth that they are totally opposed to any change in the present Australian National Flag as declared in the Flags Act (1953).

Your petitioners humbly pray that Parliament in its wisdom will take no action to change in any way the Australian National Flag.

And your petitioners as in duty bound will ever pray.

by Mr Taylor (from 249 citizens).

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

The petition of certain electors of the Division of Maranoa draws to the attention of the House the proposal by the Prime Minister to change the Australian flag.

Your petitioners therefore ask the House to take action to ensure that the Australian flag remains unchanged.

by Mr Taylor (from 96 citizens).

National Flag
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 we are extremely distressed at the Prime Minister’s intention to change the flag without real consultation with the
Australian people. Thousands of Australians fought and died under our present flag. We believe it would be an insult to their memory to change the flag, particularly in an underhanded way. We are disgusted that on the eve of ANZAC Day the Prime Minister lowered our nation's dignity by questioning our flag in front of a foreign audience in Indonesia.

Your petitioners therefore ask that the House do everything in its power to ensure any decision on the future of the Australian flag is decided by all the Australian people by way of a referendum and not by the Government, which sits isolated from the Australian people in its ivory tower in Canberra.

Your petitioners, as in duty bound, do ever pray.

by Dr Bob Woods (from 817 citizens).

Petitions received.

PARLIAMENTARY DELEGATION TO THE ASEAN INTER-PARLIAMENTARY ORGANISATION, BANGKOK, AND TO THE REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES

Report

Mr NEWELL (Richmond) (9.41 a.m.)—I present the report of the Australian parliamentary delegation to the Twelfth General Assembly of the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Organisation conference held in Bangkok, Thailand, from 12 to 23 November 1991, and of the visit to the Republic of the Philippines from 12 to 14 November 1991.

First, I would like to thank my colleague the honourable member for Groom (Mr Taylor) for his attendance at the conference and for his participation in the enlightening visit of the delegation to the Philippines.

On returning from the AIPO conference of 1990, the honourable member for Petrie (Mr Johns) raised some points in this House about the role of the observers at the AIPO conference. The situation remains unchanged to a large extent. At the same time, I believe the AIPO conference still provides an invaluable opportunity for informal meetings and briefings on matters of great importance to the South East Asian region of which Australia is a part.

In response to correspondence from the honourable member for Petrie to the AIPO Presiding Officers, the Australian delegation to Bangkok was given a chance to discuss an enhanced participatory role for future Australian observer delegations. An opportunity was created for the delegation to attend a collective dialogue session with other countries. This was in addition to the individual dialogue session which had previously been the one occasion on which formal interaction between AIPO delegations and observers had occurred.

The delegation is grateful for the role of the Australian Embassy in providing briefing when the delegation was unable to observe proceedings at the AIPO meeting. The Third Secretary, Mr Alistair McLean, is to be thanked for arranging the program of briefings by Australian Embassy staff.

His Excellency, Mr Richard Butler, Australian Ambassador to Thailand, was absent early in the week while visiting Phnom Penh, but his briefing to the delegation on some aspects of his visit there was greatly appreciated. This contributed further to the educative nature of the delegation.

I had the honour of addressing the first plenary session of the AIPO conference. It presented me with the opportunity to highlight the importance of the increased interaction between ASEAN and Australia, particularly in view of the growth in the relationship in areas such as education, environment, services, immigration, narcotics control, public health and tourism. I also had cause to refer to the need for AIPO to encourage parliamentary links with Cambodia and Vietnam and to support the emergence of democratic parliamentary structures elsewhere in the region.

Further, I welcomed the introduction of the collective dialogue session and reiterated Australia's interest in a greater participatory role for observer delegations. In opening remarks at the collective dialogue session, Dr Prasop Ratanakorn, Secretary General of the Thai National Group, called for the emphasis to be placed on matters of mutual interest. I felt that, unfortunately, this did not occur.

Malaysia used this session to raise criticism by Australia, Canada and New Zealand of Malaysian and Indonesian management of tropical rainforests. Malaysia expressed concern that there were misconceptions and
referred to successful management programs now in place in Sarawak and Sabah. I supported the view expressed by a Singapore delegate that the loss of tropical rainforests was not just a single country’s concern but rather was an issue of global significance.

On the subject of access to Western markets, I pointed to Australia’s support for the concept of free trade while raising the issue of a need to maintain quarantine standards to protect our own environment.

The individual dialogue session was most important for me. I had a chance to question Malaysia’s decision not to attend the UNCED earth summit in Brazil. I pointed out that the country would be better served by attending the UN conference, answering its critics and correcting the half-truths which Malaysia perceives are abounding on the issue. It was with great pleasure that I noted Malaysia’s attendance at UNCED and the active role that it took there.

The official Australian delegation to the Philippines which preceded the AIPO conference delegation provided an opportunity to review Australian aid programs first-hand and certainly made efficient use of delegates’ time. Thanks must be extended to His Excellency Mr Mack Williams, Australian Ambassador to the Philippines, and to Mr Robert Owen-Jones, Third Secretary-Political, as well as embassy staff.

In the Philippines the delegation was well briefed on the agricultural development projects, the Philippine elections and the country’s growing democratic institutions, and the export of Australian education services to the Philippines. The delegation also inspected the Subic Bay Naval Base and saw at first-hand the remains of the devastation from the Mount Pinatubo volcanic eruption.

The enhanced status accorded this delegation and the support from the Parliament certainly did much to assist the role of the delegation. To this end my thanks must also go to Miss Bronwyn Allan for the tremendous support she gave in her role as secretary. The delegation is most appreciative of her contribution to the delegation’s visits to both the Philippines and to Bangkok.

Mr TAYLOR (Groom) (9.46 a.m.)—I just want to briefly add a few comments to what the honourable member for Richmond (Mr Newell) has said. First of all, I would like to thank him for his leadership of that delegation. I would also like to add my thanks to Bronwyn Allan, the secretary to the delegation, without whose assistance and courtesy, of course, it would not have been the success that it clearly was.

I would also like to thank officials in Manila and Bangkok for their assistance, both in terms of the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Organisation conference and also their general briefing material. As the honourable member for Richmond has said, we have further thanks to give to the honourable member for Petrie (Mr Johns) who attended the eleventh session. As a result of that we were given enhanced status and enhanced access to the twelfth conference.

However, I think it is worth reading into the Hansard record an extract from our report which encapsulates the reservations that we as a delegation still have to the continuing attendance at some of these conferences:

The delegation was encouraged by the decision of AIPO to increase the opportunities for observer delegates to formally discuss matters of regional interest and concern.

However, the delegation’s view is that the introduction of a collective dialogue did not go far enough towards providing observer delegates with sufficient opportunity to hear the views of AIPO delegates across the broad range of topics discussed at AIPO. The delegation was disappointed with AIPO’s first attempt in such collective dialogue. It was poorly structured and coordinated.

It needs to be appreciated—and I do not have to remind honourable members of this—in these days of financial restraint, that the cost of international air travel for observer delegates to conferences such as AIPO, needs to be offset by demonstrable benefits to, in this case, the Australian Parliament as the provider of travel funds.

We went on in the report to say:

While the delegation appreciates the value of attending the Official Opening, and the First and Second Plenary Sessions of the conference with their set piece speeches, the only opportunity for any formal dialogue was on one morning within the
conference week when the Australian observer delegates attended the collective and individual dialogue sessions.

We continued:

Observer delegates are not invited either to observe or enter into discussion with the Committees where the real 'agenda' of AIPO is conducted. Discussion on regional matters of interest, other than those raised in the dialogue sessions, between observers and delegates is therefore confined to social occasions within the week.

I think I would have to say that that disappointment persists and I hope that at the thirteenth conference in 1992 the ability to exchange views will be enhanced.

On the Manila visit, as the honourable member for Richmond says, we had an opportunity to have a look particularly at the ramifications, physical and otherwise, of the Mount Pinatubo disaster, and also to observe at first hand the operational ramifications of the American withdrawal from that region.

Since I had just returned from the United States and discussions with the Americans on one or two aspects of that withdrawal, this was an opportunity for me and also, I suspect, for the honourable member for Richmond to see at first hand what the implications would be for the American withdrawal from its bases there, both Clark Air Base and Subic Bay Naval Base.

I would like to thank, once again, the honourable member for Richmond and the Parliament for the opportunity to be on this delegation. I only hope that, in 1992, delegates from this Parliament will have opportunities to provide further input and to exchange issues with ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Organisation colleagues, since such opportunities were not provided in 1991.

**COMMITTEES**

**Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs**

**Report**

Debate resumed from 25 June, on motion by Mr Kerr:

That the House take note of the report.

Mr NUGENT (Aston) (9.51 a.m.)—This is a continuation of the discussion on the report entitled Language and Culture—A Matter Of Survival, and already the Chairman of the Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, the honourable member for Denison (Mr Kerr), and others have canvassed its substance in some detail. The subject of the report is something that is vital to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of this country. At the time of the arrival of Europeans in this country 204 years ago, there were about 250 different Aboriginal languages and some 600 dialects. Today probably only about one in 10 survive in any healthy state. Perhaps one-third are left with some speakers but there are so few of them that those languages will inevitably die.

What is also not generally understood by the broader community is that Aboriginal languages have often a very rich grammar and a wide vocabulary. Many Aboriginal people are multilingual to an extent that many of us from European stock could only stand and wonder about, as we start to appreciate the extent of their flexibility with language.

Much of the loss of Aboriginal language is going to be irretrievable but language maintenance programs can help maintain and revive some of those that do survive. It is unlikely that dead languages will be revived but some recording of those that will die would be useful. We must accept, unfortunately, that some weak ones are going to disappear in the not too distant future. So it is important that action to save and protect those that can be preserved is as quick and as urgent as possible.

We ought to be aware of the causes of some of the disappearances of these languages. Obviously, when we first had Europeans coming here, disease was a major factor in wiping out whole communities. Displacement of communities and outright massacres just meant that many of those languages were lost early in the days of the European occupation.

The languages that stay are healthiest in remote Australia. One of the valuable opportunities afforded our Committee as it looked at this whole area was our opportunity to visit some of the more remote parts of Australia and to see in practice the healthy working languages that do survive. It is interesting to
note a comparison of our vast country with Europe, which many of us would be more familiar with. In a relatively small area in Europe there are many distinct languages in quite small areas. The Aboriginal community was really no different hundreds of years ago. I think we tend to forget that fact.

The report's recommendations cover a wide range of matters which I am not going to go into in detail because of limited time. But it does talk about actions we need to take in respect of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander media, interpreter services and general teacher training. It is ridiculous, for example, to send a non-Aboriginal teacher to a community where that person has not only no understanding of language but also no understanding of the importance of language in the culture and the importance of culture in the whole life and well-being of that community. The report makes recommendations about the training of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers themselves, linguistic training, school based education and so on.

We had extensive consultation around the country with many communities, with various levels of government and with professionals in the field. We even travelled quite extensively to some very remote parts, such as some of the Torres Strait Islands. My colleague the honourable member for Moreton (Mr Gibson), who is to speak after me, missed out on the wonders of the Torres Strait—such as Saibai Island and Murray Island and various others—because he has an aversion to small aeroplanes, and that was the only way we could get there.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, not unreasonably, are looking for support in this area. It is important that not only do we retain language and culture, but that where there is a need in those communities we enable Aboriginal people to have some degree of empowerment in our community by making sure they have access to good quality English.

There is a need for broad community awareness of the significance of language and culture to start to understand that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander disadvantage, anger and bitterness can be addressed. If the recommendations in this report can be implemented by governments of all levels, another straw in the cement of achieving reconciliation between the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and other Australians can be advanced. I urge all governments to take the action recommended in our report.

Mr Gibson (Moreton) (9.56 a.m.)—I am pleased also to have an opportunity in these few moments to make a contribution in discussion of this report on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language maintenance. Language and culture are a matter of survival. I open by thanking my Committee colleagues and, in particular, the Chairman of the Subcommittee, the honourable member for Oxley (Mr Les Scott), for his leadership in the work on this report. I thank the secretariat, Allan Kelly and Peter Ratas, who put in a lot of effort to ensure that the report was a success and that we were able to visit as many places as possible around this country to talk with Aboriginal and Islander people about this issue.

Although, in the global sense, a question of retention of Aboriginal language might appear to be a minor issue in the scheme of things, it is in fact absolutely fundamental to some of the major challenges facing this country in addressing major disadvantages that are faced by Aboriginal and Islander people. This Parliament has been debating for the last 18 months or two years a number of initiatives of this Government and a number of investigations and inquiries into the situation for Aboriginal and Islander people. In particular, we have spent a lot of time and effort on the question of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody. Earlier this year we had, on two occasions, substantial Government responses announced about responding to the recommendations of that royal commission. We have also had Government legislation to establish a process for reconciliation for Aboriginal and Islander people. My colleague the honourable member for Aston (Mr Nugent) is of course a member of that council.

When one looks at all of those issues, the underlying matter that arises all the time is the identity that Aboriginal and Islander
people have in this country and whether they have any vision for their own role in our society. Australians fail to recognise the importance of culture and language to Aboriginal and Islander people and to their vision of themselves and their self-worth and where they fit into our society.

So if we are going to actually address some of the most fundamental issues of disadvantage facing Aboriginal and Islander people, we have to look at what they consider is of value to themselves. It very clearly came to us, in our consultations, that their language—which is very much part of their culture—is fundamental to their concern about where they go in this society today.

The fact is that we have not paid due credit to the massive history of culture and language that we inherited when European settlement came to this country. We have given it very poor attention indeed. As the honourable member for Aston indicated in his comments, there was a considerable number of languages—over 200—in this country prior to European settlement, and now there are very few that are in any sort of survivable state. So it is very timely for us to address the question of Aboriginal and Islander language and culture.

In this report there are some very important recommendations. I want particularly to emphasise the role that teacher training can play in that area. In chapter 5 of our report, from page 63 onwards, we make a number of recommendations regarding teacher education and the preparation of both European and Aboriginal and Islander teachers before they go into Aboriginal and Islander communities. As a teacher who taught at an Aboriginal community, I can verify that the vast majority of teachers are given no preparation at all about Aboriginal language, culture or identity. They do not really know what is happening when they walk into that community.

I urge the Commonwealth Government and the State governments to look at the recommendations in this report about adequately preparing, through pre-service training, the teachers we are going to send into Aboriginal communities, to give them some better appreciation of the rich culture and heritage that does exist in Aboriginal communities; so that they do not, by fair means or foul, contribute to the continued destruction of Aboriginal language and culture. It is a fundamental issue for the future of Aboriginal people that we address this question in teacher training and in education. It is also important that we give strong support in teacher training institutions to the training of Aboriginal and Islander people, and that we recognise that they are probably best placed to strengthen Aboriginal culture. (Time expired)

Mr SPEAKER—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 sitting Thursday.

Standing Committee on Procedure
Debate resumed from 25 June, on motion by Mr Scholes:
That the House take note of the report.

Mr WALKER (Robertson) (10.02 a.m.)—This report, entitled The Standing Orders Governing Questions Seeking Information, is about Question Time. School children are taught that Question Time is the highlight of the parliamentary sitting day. It is certainly one of the few forms of the House that has any real relevance to ordinary Australians, particularly now that it is televised. It can always be relied upon to generate a lot of noise and excitement. Perhaps that is not only because the testing of Ministers provides the Opposition with an opportunity to score points, but also because the style and content of Ministers' responses can have an effect on their careers in the Executive. No doubt those reasons explain why it has become so partisan, with each side's scripts being carefully prepared in advance.

In recent years, as radio and then television have featured Question Time, we have seen it gradually become dominated by the leadership. The overwhelming majority of Opposition questions are asked by Opposition leaders, and the overwhelming majority of the Government's dorothy dixers are directed to the Prime Minister and a handful of senior Ministers. Junior Ministers are seldom tested. Backbench members get few opportunities to
ask questions that relate to their own electorates. It is not surprising that there is dissatisfaction within the ranks of the backbench, both Opposition and Government, about this fundamental failure of responsible government.

The main bones of contention are the length of Question Time, the complicated and internally inconsistent rules governing the asking of questions, and the application of the relevance rule to Ministers' longwinded answers. About 12 questions are being asked in the 45 minutes allowed. In an average year of about 60 sitting days, the Opposition would get 360 questions. Opposition backbenchers would be lucky to ask 60 questions; that is slightly more than one each in a year. If the National Party leadership regularly exercises its right to ask questions, its backbenchers could be lucky if they get to ask a single question.

For those reasons, I take the view that, if Question Time is to remain an important feature of the Parliament, measures simply have to be taken to increase the number of questions. The first recommendation in this report to that end relates to the length of Question Time. The Committee considered lengthening the time to 60 or 90 minutes. However, it was felt that little might be achieved that way if preambles to questions and ministerial answers simply expanded to fill the extra time. The Committee also considered putting a time limit on answers, but was faced with the inevitable problem that while some questions could be answered simply yes or no, others of extreme importance required Ministers to convey a considerable amount of information if they were to be properly answered. In the end, the Committee opted for a guaranteed minimum number of questions to each side. The report recommends seven.

Secondly, we suggested that Standing Orders should briefly set out the broad procedural rules about questions but that the Speaker at the commencement of each Parliament should lay down the particular rules that will be applied by the Chair to ensure that questions are brief and framed in appropriate parliamentary language and that answers are both relevant and concise.

At the moment the Standing Orders are full of inconsistent and highly complex rules about questions. Speakers from both sides of politics have been lenient in the extreme in allowing the rules to be breached. These days almost no question complies with all the provisions of standing order 144. There is no provision in the rules about the argumentative preamble that prefaces all Opposition questions. Most questions are replete with argument, inferences, imputations, epithets, ironical expressions and hypothetical matter. They invariably seek to score points rather than genuinely seek information.

It is also fair to say that a great many answers are totally irrelevant and almost all are unnecessarily longwinded. In the end it is the Speaker's job to see that the forms of the House work. That is why we have recommended that subject to some general guidance in the Standing Orders about questions being concise and answers being relevant, the current unintelligible and unworkable code should be scrapped and replaced by the Speaker making it clear what will and will not be accepted. Both questioners and Ministers who offend will then be returned to their seats. I know that places even greater responsibility on the Speaker, but quite frankly I can see no better way of making the system work.

Mrs SULLIVAN (Moncrieff) (10.07 a.m.)—The time allowed for debating the Procedure Committee report on Question Time is very brief. It is not possible to do the subject justice in a five-minute speech. However, there are a number of matters in the report that I would like to highlight. I draw the attention of honourable members to the fact that there was a previous report on this subject tabled in the House on 29 October 1987. The Government's response to the recommendations of that report are incorporated in the report we are considering at the present moment. I do recommend that members look at both reports very closely because I do not think there is a more important part of the day in Parliament than Question Time. It is when the accountability of the Executive
to Parliament is exercised. Without a doubt it is not working now.

In the introduction to the report we get an outline of what this report covers and it has a significantly limited scope. The changes proposed by the Committee relate to the removal of a number of specific rules for questions, an expansion of the requirements for answers, and a recommendation that the Speaker make a statement at the beginning of each Parliament on how he or she will interpret those and the other Standing Orders dealing with Questions.

To me the most important part of this report, if someone wants an analysis of what has gone wrong with Question Time, is the table contained on page 14 headed ‘Questions Without Notice 1976-1992’. At the end of my speech I shall seek leave to incorporate this table in Hansard.

Comparing the first year to which the statistics apply, 1976, with the last year for which there is a full year’s statistics, 1991, we find that the number of days on which questions were asked has declined from 73 to 64—nine days fewer. That is a decline of 12 per cent in the number of sitting days when members had an opportunity to ask questions. However, the next line in the table is even more significant. The total number of questions asked in 1976 was 1,447. In 1991 it was 865; and that was, I might say, a significant increase compared with previous years. Nevertheless, 582 fewer questions were asked in that year, a decline of more than 40 per cent. The average number of questions asked per day in 1976 was 19.8. In 1992 it was 13.5, a decline of 6.3 questions or 30 per cent. When one looks at the figure for 1992 so far, it is even worse—down to 11.5 questions per day.

The average length of Question Time in 1976 was 48.5 minutes. In 1991 it was 62.4 minutes. In 1992 it has been 62.3. The increase from 1976 to 1991 was an increase of 13.9 minutes, or more than 22 per cent. However, when you look at the final column you see that what would appear to be an apparent improvement in that area is not an improvement at all. The average time taken for a question and answer in 1976 was 2.4 minutes. In 1991 it was 4.6 minutes. So, although total time increased by more than 22 per cent, the time taken to answer the questions had nearly doubled: it was up more than 90 per cent. This year it is 5.4 minutes, so it has more than doubled. This is what has happened to Question Time.

The problem arises from the question of relevance. The Procedure Committee has taken an interesting course to try to rectify this matter. I will not reiterate those recommendations. The previous speaker, the honourable member for Robertson (Mr Walker), did go through them. However, I draw honourable members’ attention to pages 20 to 21 and an outline of a recommendation about a statement being made by the Speaker at the beginning of each Parliament and to pages 22 to 23 which recommend a standing order.

We really have to look very closely at this matter and be serious about it. I have not had the opportunity to ask a single question this Parliament, and in the previous Parliament I was able to ask only one question. If backbenchers cannot ask questions, the system just simply is not working for their constituents. I am not critical in any way of our frontbenchers; I know they have a job to do. However, frankly, the only time Question Time in this Parliament is now functioning in any way that serves the people is if there is some sort of scandal involving a Minister which can be probed through questions and and words can be put on the parliamentary record. But, other than that, it is barely functioning.

One thing I am disappointed about in the report is the dismissal of the idea of supplementary questions. I did serve for 10 years in the Senate. I am always very reluctant to mention that in this House because there are some senators who seem to think that being a senator somehow makes them superior to other people. I do not think that. But in fact the supplementary question system works quite well in the Senate and I do not think it should be dismissed out of hand. The standing order relating to supplementary questions is one we should try, to see whether it does have an effect. I believe the growing use of
supplementary questions in the Senate has made Question Time there far more effective, and I think supplementary questions are something we should pay attention to.

I seek leave to have incorporated in Hansard the table I referred to earlier.

Leave granted.

The table read as follows—

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13 Source: Department of the House of Representatives Chamber Research Office statistical records, as at 2/6/92.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. G.G.D. Scholes)—Before I call the next business, I indicate to the honourable member that another table was prepared which indicated the change in who asked the questions. It is not incorporated in the report and I think it should have been. I apologise to the House for using the Chair for that purpose, but I am the Chairman of the Committee.

The time allotted for this debate has expired. The debate is adjourned and the resumption of the debate will be an order of the day for the next sitting Thursday.

INCOME TAX ASSESSMENT (ISOLATED AREA ZONE EXTENSION) AMENDMENT BILL 1992

First Reading

Bill presented by Mr Filing.

Mr FILING (Moore) (10.13 a.m.)—The purpose of the Income Tax Assessment (Isolated Area Zone Extension) Amendment Bill 1992 is to remove the anomaly that currently exists under the Income Tax Assessment Act. The anomaly discriminates
against persons working in remote areas that are not covered under zones A and B as referred to in the Act. According to the Income Tax Assessment Act 1936, the principal Act, a tax rebate is provided to residents of isolated areas to compensate them for harsh climatic conditions, isolation and the high cost of living in these areas. The areas to which the rebate applies under the Act are covered by zone A and zone B, which apply to land mainly in the north, west and centre of Australia.

The zones also cover a number of islands off the coast of Australia. However, the jurisdiction of the zones ceases at Australia's shoreline or the shoreline of an offshore island. It appears that the legislation was drafted before technology permitted people to live outside these parameters. Therefore, under the Act no consideration for a rebate is given to people, for example, living on man made ocean installations, such as oil rigs or gas platforms, in seas off the shore of either zone but still in Australian territorial waters.

This Bill will ensure that areas relating to the above and bound by an imaginary line from the shore point parallel to either the equator or lines of longitude, out to Australia's territorial limit, will be incorporated under the Act. The Bill seems to be the most practical and logical solution to the anomaly whereby people who should be eligible for rebates, according to their geographical and environmental location, have not been able to access these benefits.

The Government has recently amended the income tax Act to address these inconsistencies in provisions for fringe benefits tax. It must therefore follow that these inconsistencies relating to the zones and rebates are addressed so that claims for rebates can be made by people living out of zones A and B but still in isolated areas under Australia's jurisdiction.

According to provisions announced in the 1992-93 Federal Budget, the base components of zone rebates will be increased by 25 per cent from 1 January 1993. The new levels will be $338 for zone A, $57 for zone B and $1,173 for special areas in the zones. According to the Budget Papers, the increase in rebates will be effective for PAYE purposes from 1 January 1993. For assessment in 1992-93 and for provisional tax purposes, the base rebate of 12.5 per cent will be proportionally increased. For this year, the levels will be $304 for zone A, $51 for zone B and $1,056 for special areas.

There is now a prime opportunity to amend the legislation to allow those who are justifiably eligible for rebates to benefit from the announced provisions that will come into effect from January 1993. The recent changes to the legislation and the foreshadowed changes to zone rebates make it even more pertinent to ensure that the Income Tax Act is fair and just in its treatment of people living in remote areas not covered under zones A and B. These people, who would now benefit from the recent changes to the Income Tax Act regarding fringe benefits tax and who should be eligible for the above-mentioned provisions in the 1992-93 Federal Budget, should not be further disadvantaged. I commend the Bill to the House and present the explanatory memorandum to the Bill.

Bill read a first time.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. G.G.D. Scholes)—In accordance with sessional order 104A, the second reading will be made an order of the day for the next sitting Thursday.

ABORTION FUNDING ABOLITION BILL 1992

First Reading

Bill presented by Mr Webster.

Mr WEBSTER (Macquarie) (10.17 a.m.)—The Abortion Funding Abolition Bill 1992 addresses the Medicare subsidisation of abortion and seeks to allow Medicare funding only for abortions performed to avert the death of the mother, or in cases where the procedure is for a different purpose and the doctor is unaware that an abortion would occur. The Bill also requires doctors to certify that the reason for the abortion was to avert the death of the mother.

Honourable members will be aware that this is not the first time this Bill has been introduced into the House. I first introduced this Bill into the House of Representatives as
the Abortion Funding Abolition Bill 1989 on 17 August 1989 and again, as the Abortion Funding Abolition Bill 1990, on 6 December 1990. On the first occasion it received 57 minutes of debating time and on the second occasion 83 minutes, the last day of debating being 28 November last year. This totals less than 2½ hours in three years.

This Parliament stands condemned for the fact that it has refused to bring this Bill on for full debate and resolution. Worst of all, it is now accountable in part for the fact that in excess of 200,000 perfectly healthy unborn children have been destroyed since the Bill was first introduced. It is a clear indictment on us all that, during the last six months, Medicare funded its one millionth abortion. We all stand condemned in respect of the prayer that is prayed at the commencement of each sitting day in this place. In that prayer, we pray that the decisions made as a result of our deliberations will be for the true welfare of all Australians, which includes the unborn. Ignoring this Bill is a blatant contradiction of that prayer.

Many hundreds of petitions supporting the amendments contained in this Bill and carrying hundreds of thousands of signatures have been presented to Parliament. This Australia-wide support clearly demonstrates that the subject of this Bill is of great interest and concern to many Australian citizens. The debate so far allowed is clearly insufficient. A matter of such public importance demands more than 20 or 30 minutes on one day and another 30 minutes some months later.

For many years now, for both ethical and political reasons, members of parliament and senators have been asked to make their own judgment as to what rights are held by unborn individuals. The debate has been alive for three years, and members in this place are fully acquainted with the Bill and the basic issues it addresses. Apart from debate that has taken place here, I have personally written to all honourable members giving reasons for introducing the Bill and seeking their support at the time it is voted upon.

It is interesting to note that some members who do not support the Bill believe it is time the Bill was brought to resolution through a vote. The honourable member for Petrie (Mr Johns) said in his speech on the last day the Bill was debated:

I cannot support the Bill, but I do support this: Parliament should have a vote on the matter and dispose of it because it has gone on for a number of years. Each of us has views that each of us holds dear, and I do not think we can allow this debate to go on and on and on without the resolution of the Parliament. So I do agree with members opposite that we should bring it on and vote on the matter.

For each day that this Bill fails to be resolved in the way suggested by the honourable member for Petrie, hundreds of innocent unborn children are destroyed. We must therefore stand up and be counted. We cannot run away and hide. Do we believe that abortion should be funded through the public purse or not? That is the crucial question that must be resolved by this Parliament.

I commend the Bill to the House. In doing so, I challenge honourable members to come to grips with this important, ethical and urgent political issue. I seek leave to table the accompanying explanatory memorandum.

Leave granted.

Bill read a first time.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. G.G.D. Scholes)—In accordance with sessional order 104A, the second reading will be made an order of the day for the next sitting Thursday.

HUMAN RIGHTS IN VIETNAM

Mr RUDDOCK (Dundas) (10.22 a.m.)—I move:

That this House:

(1) acknowledges the fundamental human right of all peoples to practice their religion without fear or persecution;

(2) notes that the United Vietnamese Buddhist Congregation has been denied this right by the Vietnamese Government through the forcible disbanding of this religious order in 1981; and

(3) calls upon the Australian Government to support the aspirations of the United Vietnamese Buddhist Congregation by urging the Vietnamese Government to:

(a) allow the United Vietnamese Buddhist Congregation to freely practice their religion and implement their educational, training and welfare programs in Vietnam;
(b) release the Most Venerable Thich Huyen Quang, Thich Duc Nhuan, Professor Thich Tue Sy, Historian Thich Tri Sieu, Venerable Thich Nguyen Giac, Thich Thien Tan, Thich Phuc Vien and all other Buddhist monks and nuns from illegal detention; and
(c) return and fully compensate the Buddhist community for all confiscated property.

Mr Deputy Speaker, notwithstanding the end of the Cold War, as it was known, and the new world order, the world we look at today is not a very pleasant place. I despair each day as I read what is happening in Europe, particularly in former Yugoslavia. I look at Africa and the situation in Somalia, and I look at our own region, particularly in Indo-China. The motion today, in particular, is about Indo-China and the situation relating to human rights in Vietnam. Arbitrary detentions, widespread torture and mistreatment of detainees continues, as do severe restrictions on freedom of speech, press, assembly, association, movement, workers rights, and the rights of citizens to change their government. I think we all know and understand that.

We have had the opportunity recently of hearing from people who have been detained, one an Australian permanent resident. Colonel Vo Dai Ton, who returned to this country after release, having been in detention for 10 years or more, was able to give personal testimony about what happens in the re-education camps and prisons of Vietnam. These restrictions are in clear breach of international law and covenants to which Vietnam is a signatory. Vietnam signed the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the optional protocol on 24 September 1982. Article 6 states, in part: No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his life.

Article 7 states:
No-one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

Article 9 states:
No-one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest or detention.

Importantly, Article 18 states:
1. Everyone shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. This right shall include freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice, and freedom, either individual-ly or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teaching.

2. No one shall be subject to coercion which would impair his freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice.

3. Freedom to manifest one’s religion or beliefs may be subject only to such limitations as are prescribed by law and are necessary to protect public safety, order, health, or morals or the fundamental rights and freedoms of others.

4. The States Parties to the present Covenant undertake to have respect for the liberty of parents and, when applicable, legal guardians to ensure the religious and moral education of their children in conformity with their convictions.

I go on to article 19, also accepted by Vietnam, which states: Everyone shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of his choice.

The motion today asks the House to acknowledge the fundamental human right of all peoples to practise their religion without fear or persecution. It should be said that the Vietnamese Constitution does guarantee the right to freedom of worship and religious practice. However, the Constitution also provides that no-one may misuse religions to violate state laws and policies. It is this clause that the Government of Vietnam uses to justify its repression of religious freedom in Vietnam, particularly the suppression of the United Vietnamese Buddhist Congregation.

I have spent a great deal of time over the years speaking to and acting on behalf of the Vietnamese community in its struggles, particularly efforts to assist friends and families still in Vietnam. What has struck me most often in my dealings with people in the community is their enormous courage and determination. The Vietnamese community in Australia has shown quiet but firm resolve in its quest to help refugees in Vietnam escape from the religious intolerance of the Vietnamese Government.

Buddhism itself is being threatened in Vietnam today. This motion is intended to focus the attention of all of us on the enormous difficulties being experienced, par-
ticularly by the Buddhist community in its homeland. The Vietnamese Government controls all aspects of religious activity in the country, at state, local government, district and community levels. These controls include the vetting and approval of candidates for ordination and enrolment in seminaries. In effect, one cannot practise openly as a religious priest or minister without such government approval or control. The Government also established state sponsored religious bodies, including the Vietnam Buddhist Church in 1981, and state selected religious officials have the right to represent religious groupings and denominations at various levels of government. Understandably, they are viewed with suspicion.

At the time of the establishment of the official Buddhist Church in Vietnam, the United Vietnamese Buddhist Congregation, which was vocal in its opposition to this move, was forcibly disbanded. The United Vietnamese Buddhist Congregation is accepted by Buddhists worldwide as their truly representative body. It grew out of the Vietnamese Buddhist Federation, which was established in the early 1920s. Since 1964 the UVBC, as it is known, has been actively leading the community, not only in promoting religious belief but also in providing education, welfare and community assistance where needed. It has looked after millions of refugees, established hundreds of orphanages, schools, colleges, hospitals, centres for the handicapped and child-care houses, and has also set up small industrial farms, factories, publishing houses and so on. Its work was crucial during a time of social and political upheaval and it provided succour and refuge to many thousands of hopeless, homeless and displaced people.

This work was carried on despite the widespread destruction and the confiscation of temples and seminaries and, indeed, much of the property of the Buddhist community. Of the 10,000 temples which existed over the 2,000 years of the Buddhist movement in Vietnam, only a few hundred remain today. In 1975 the Administrative Council of the UVBC was decimated through arrest and murder of its members. Between 1975 and 1980, nearly 400 primary and high schools, factories, farms and all other welfare, medical and educational institutions were taken over and occupied by government bodies. All seminaries, nunneries, training and community worship places were closed. The Vietnamese Youth Buddhist Association, the equivalent of our scouting movement, was disbanded and its leaders arrested. That Association had over 200,000 members and 15,000 leaders.

All other lay Buddhist movements, such as the Student Buddhist Association, the Young Men's Buddhist Association, the Young Women's Buddhist Association, the Social Service Youth School, and the Professional Buddhists Association, were also disbanded. All Buddhist chaplaincy units were stopped and their clergies arrested. All teaching, welfare, education and social activities have been ordered disbanded. More than 10,000 young monks and nuns have been forcibly driven out of monasteries and temples. Associations for organising religious gatherings have been ignored by local governments and no-one can be officially permitted to join a monastic life.

Honourable members should remember that Buddhism is the principal religion of Vietnam. It is practised by 80 per cent of the population of 70 million people. Amnesty's report says that continued detention of members of religious organisations was noted. That report was published in April 1992. It says:

Government efforts to regulate religious activities and to 'unify' religious groups have resulted in restrictions on the full exercise of (religious) freedom. At least 60 prisoners of conscience and possible prisoners of conscience continue to be held in detention in Viet Nam, apparently for the peaceful expression of their religious beliefs.

In support of the courage of actions of those who continue to resist oppression and fight for their basic right to practise their religion, I am moving this motion in my name. It does express concern that a number of very distinguished leaders of the Buddhist community should be released from illegal detention. But since this motion was placed on the Notice Paper in May, further intelligence has shown that two more Buddhist monks remain in detention under house arrest at a time when
it was thought that they may have been released. I mention particularly Thich Quang Do and Thich Huyen Quang who have been under house arrest since 1982 when they criticised the establishment by the Government of the Vietnam Buddhist church, the state controlled body.

I believe the Government is of the view that these two gentlemen have been given freedom, but I am informed that this is not the case at all. I am providing that information to the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Senator Gareth Evans). Hopefully, during his visit to Vietnam, which is planned shortly, he will be able to follow up these matters with the regime and draw to the attention of the Government this motion and our view that the most basic human rights, particularly freedom of religion, should not be violated or denigrated.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. G.G.D. Scholes)—Is the motion seconded?

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

Dr CATLEY (Adelaide) (10.33 a.m.)—I am happy to support this motion. It acknowledges the fundamental human right of people to practise their religion. It notes that the united Vietnamese Buddhist congregation has been denied this right by the Vietnamese Government. It asks the Australian Government to support the aspirations of Vietnamese Buddhists by pointing out to the Vietnamese Government that it has been repressing their religious rights and it asks them to desist.

Vietnam is a country which is attracting increasing attention in Australia, mainly because of the economic reforms it is presently undertaking after the previous mismanagement which was typical of communist regimes. These reforms have been adopted after seeing the other countries around it growing very quickly and also worrying about the possibility of the regime collapsing if it does not undertake economic reforms.

In Vietnam, perestroika is called doi moi. The approach does seem to be bearing some fruit. Visitors to Vietnam assure me that some increasing economic prosperity is under way, particularly in the southern part of the country that never fully and wholeheartedly adopted the communist system of economic planning. Indeed, a former Australian Prime Minister wrote recently that he believes Vietnam will be the next of the Asian tigers and that it offers economic opportunities for Australia.

That may well be correct, but before we get carried away by the economic opportunities offered in Vietnam I think we need to get a broader picture of the kind of social activities and life that exist for the people of Vietnam. After all, when we plunged into the enthusiastic trade with Communist China of the 1980s, we ignored the essentially repressive character of its regime and got rather embarrassed when, in 1989, it murdered and repressed the Chinese democracy rallies, as we saw on international television.

If we want human rights to be a consideration in our relations with other countries—and I believe they should be—we need to face the reality of the countries that we are dealing with at the time we do the dealing. We should not hide from these realities as we pursue the economic opportunities—as I believe we should. Few of the states to our north are unblemished democracies, and we must treat them pretty honestly in this respect. This includes Vietnam. If we do not, difficulties in our diplomatic relations with them will emerge at a later stage. If we do not honestly confront the kind of regimes that we are trading with for economic reasons, we will find ourselves embarrassed by Tiananmen Square type events in the future.

I support this private member's motion because it forms an essential element in taking an honest approach to the Vietnamese regime. I support it for the same reasons that I have supported rallies of local Australian Vietnamese communities, outside Parliament House and elsewhere in this country, for democracy in their former country, and in the same spirit as I have supported human rights in other countries and opposed their abuse.

We need to confront now the fact that, for all the Vietnamese regime's pretensions of reformism, and some of these are realistic in
the economic sphere, it remains one of the world's last Communist regimes and has a human rights record that is objectively, as the previous speaker, the honourable member for Dundas (Mr Ruddock), pointed out, no better than that of the People's Republic of China, with which we have been so concerned over the last couple of years, and indeed no better than that of its former patron, the former Soviet Union. I believe we can do business with these states, but we do not have to accord them moral legitimacy, nor approve the kind of political rule that they establish.

There is a very strong Australian Vietnamese community in Adelaide, especially in the suburbs of Kilburn, Blair Athol, Clearview, Enfield, Hindmarsh and Croydon Park. The Vietnamese Association has its office on the Port Road and the Vietnamese Christian community, led by Father Augustine Thu and Sister Elizabeth Nghia, is headquartered in Hindmarsh. We need to recognise that the Vietnamese community has done very well in Australia and many Vietnamese have established successful businesses. Their young Australian Vietnamese are now moving through the tertiary education system, moving into the professions and starting to have an impact on the intellectual life of this country. I welcome that very strongly.

They are among the leading communities that have immigrated to this country and they take on Australian citizenship enthusiastically, as we all know from going to citizenship ceremonies at local councils. They are a model immigrant community in terms of integration into Australian life. I know from talking to these Vietnamese Australians, and they speak often from personal experience of the regime in Vietnam, that the single most worrisome thing that confronts them is the life experienced by their families in their country of origin. We have some responsibility to them as well as to our international diplomacy to place some importance on talking to the Vietnamese regime about what is happening to the relatives of our Australian Vietnamese citizens in this country.

The stories they tell me make it clear that the situation for Buddhists in Vietnam, which has been referred to in some detail, and I commend that, by the honourable member for Dundas, is not unique, and indeed the human rights record of the regime and for people in Vietnam is rather deplorable. Let me give a couple of examples. I have worked for the last couple of years with the Tran family of Clearview to try to get out of Vietnam an uncle of theirs who has been in and out of prison since 1975. His only crime was his conscription years ago into the army of the old regime of South Vietnam. I found quite recently that, fortunately, he has escaped from Vietnam but he is still languishing, with some of the rest of his family, in a refugee camp in South East Asia. I am hopeful that he will be able to resettle in Australia shortly.

Another one of my friends, Mr Dac Tri Tran, came to Australia in 1986 after 10 years in a Vietnamese prison camp, during which time he was beaten, tortured and kept in a cage with his arms and legs shackled. Like other prisoners, he was forced to supplement his very meagre prison ration with rats, snakes and frogs. His crime was that he worked as a lecturer in chemistry in the national military academy of the old republic. That kind of story is something we associate with Solzhenitsyn's memoirs of Gulag from the late 1940s and early 1950s. This is still going on.

These are the types of cases with which many members of this House will be quite familiar from their work as members of parliament dealing with Vietnamese Australian people, but, even if they do not have Vietnamese Australians as part of their constituency, they would know just from reading the newspapers of the instances of human rights abuse that regularly occur as part of the character and structure of the regime in Vietnam.

We should not be deceived into thinking, as some were in the case of China, that a degree of economic liberalisation means that the Hanoi regime is benign and relaxing its political control: far from it. There has been news emanating from the regime that it is releasing political prisoners. I have read those reports, and they are releasing political prisoners, many of whom have been detained since 1975. But what the regime does not tell
us is that, as the honourable member for Dundas pointed out, it is also making fresh arrests of people it sees as new threats to its authority. It has been imposing new sentences for activities that we in Australia would regard as completely normal political behaviour: association, petitioning government and trying to bring reforms to areas of social life that people find unsatisfactory. Only in May—again, the honourable member for Dundas stole my thunder on this one—a dissident who had already spent 11 years in re-education camps was re-sentenced to 20 years in gaol for unsubstantiated 'subversive activities'.

Nor should we take too seriously the news that the regime is now tolerating the candidacy of independents in elections. While that is true, any candidate still needs to be approved by the Vietnam Fatherland Front, which is made up of various affiliates of the Communist Party, so that that is an effective bar to anyone not amenable to the Party's line of thinking.

The motion before the House is specifically concerned with the persecution of Buddhist people involved in religious activity. It notes that the United Vietnamese Buddhist Congregation has been denied the right to practise its religion free of persecution since 1981, when the order was disbanded and its property was confiscated. One of the clauses in the motion calls for the restoration of that property, a process that has been under way in the former communist regimes of eastern Europe, where in some instances they have had to trace titles to property back to the 1930s. That is not going to be necessary in the case of Vietnam, and I think that some urging from our Government in that respect ought to be undertaken.

This activity on the part of the regime indicates a special kind of intolerance because, as a religious order, the United Vietnamese Buddhist Congregation represents no physical threat to the communist government and its regime, other than in its role as an alternative source of moral authority and received wisdom. The Vietnamese regime is totalitarian and permits its people no loyalty other than for the Communist Party. I experienced a similar situation in Communist Poland when I taught there about a decade ago. The churches were full and the shops were empty. That was the threat to the regime—not a physical threat of political organisation but the demonstration of people's loyalty to a spiritual order, which in this case is Buddhist and in the Polish case is Catholic.

The inability of the regime to deliver economic well-being to its people is a real threat. It probably is a real threat in Vietnam, and one that we should seek to encourage as democrats. In the case of Poland, it did eventually lead to the toppling of the regime and the establishment of a democratic society. Such a process I welcomed in the case of Poland, and I will, in turn, welcome it in the case of Vietnam. In the meantime, it is a process I think we should encourage. We should not seek not to do business with the Vietnamese community and nation merely because of its regime. (Time expired)

Mr HALVERSON (Casey) (10.43 a.m.) The war in Vietnam ended with the collapse of the Republic of Vietnam in April 1975, and the country was formally reunified with the inauguration of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam in July 1976. Although the Constitution of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam guarantees its citizens the right to freedom of worship and freedom of religion, in practice there are significant government-imposed restrictions that effectively limit the exercise of these most fundamental of human rights.

About 80 per cent of Vietnamese are Buddhists. However, for years the Buddhists have been one of the most repressed and persecuted religious groups in Vietnam. Prior to 1975 the majority of Buddhists were associated with the United Vietnamese Buddhist Congregation. This organisation was established in the aftermath of the overthrow of President Diem, whose Government had been particularly repressive towards Buddhists.

The UVBC aimed to unify all Buddhists in Vietnam and sought to bring an end to the war through reconciliation between all parties. It was also involved in secular affairs, such as
the running of schools, hospitals, orphanages, day care centres, relief activities, particularly in regard to refugees, and projects to promote self-help amongst Buddhist clergy and laity.

The UVBC welcomed the signing of the Paris Accord in January 1973 and urged its followers to support the implementation of the plan for national reconciliation in Vietnam. Despite the desire of the Buddhists for peace—for they are traditionally gentle, peace-loving people—and the support the UVBC was prepared to offer the new Government to achieve stability in an historically politically troubled land, many Buddhist monks and nuns were arrested for alleged anti-government activities. Others were detained without charge or trial and placed under house arrest or sent to so-called re-education camps. Their only crime was the non-violent expression of their opinions and beliefs.

Although the Buddhists had hoped that their position would improve after the change of government in 1975, their hopes soon proved to be ill-founded. Rather than decreasing, religious intolerance and persecution flourished. In fact, it was encouraged under the new socialist regime. In November 1977 as part of the continuing crackdown on religious groups and organisations, the Vietnamese Government announced a comprehensive set of rules which were designed to bring all religious and cultural activities under the control of the state and the Communist Party. These repressive measures, aimed at destroying the autonomy and authority of religious organisations in Vietnam, included restrictions on the conduct of religious services, religious education and religious gatherings. Local government agencies were given and actively exercised the power to confiscate the property of religious communities. All candidates for ordination or enrolment in seminaries had to be approved by government authorities. The power to select representatives of religious orders and organisations to serve on government and other official bodies was vested in the state. Monks, ministers and priests could not publicly practise their religious functions without government approval.

In 1981, the Government, in line with its policy of state control over religious institutions, established a single Buddhist organisation known as the Vietnam Buddhist Church. Despite the fact that it did not represent the majority of Buddhists in Vietnam, the VBC was the only Buddhist group to receive official government recognition. Many leading Buddhists who were members of the United Vietnamese Buddhist Congregation were quite understandably opposed to this latest move to further undermine their rights and impose additional government controls over the practice of religion in Vietnam. Some of them who publicly accused government authorities of persecution and human rights violations have been under house arrest since 1982. Others who were also detained at that time, often without charge or trial, were sent to re-education camps to serve sentences from three years to life imprisonment. The whereabouts of many are still unknown.

In 1986 the government relaxed or modified several of the measures it had previously adopted to control the activities of religious groups. Subsequently some of the people, including Buddhist monks and nuns who had been in prison because of their involvement with religious groups, were released. By 1988 the numbers held in detention had been significantly reduced. However, in May 1991 a new law was passed which applied to all religions practised in Vietnam. Ostensibly this new law replaced the previous restrictive measures with more reasonable options. In reality, little changed and in some ways more restrictions were imposed. For example, under the new law any nominations to religious office in Vietnam, overseas travel to and from Vietnam by representatives of religious organisations, major religious meetings or gatherings and the opening of religious schools and seminaries were subject to government approval.

In reality, in Vietnam today there is very little, if any, genuine religious freedom. Government authorities and agencies at national, state and local levels exercise control over all religious activities. Unfortunately, Vietnamese citizens are still being arrested
and/or detained for peaceful expression of their religious beliefs.

I would like to take this opportunity to provide some brief details about some of the Buddhist monks, members of the United Vietnamese Buddhist Congregation, who are still in detention in Vietnam and who have been specifically mentioned in this motion. In doing so, I gratefully acknowledge the assistance of Amnesty International in providing much of this information which is contained in the report entitled Viet Nam—Long-Term Political Prisoners.

Venerable Thich Quang Do, researcher, scholar and human rights activist, was arrested in February 1982. He has remained under house arrest without charge or trial since that time. His crime was to publicly protest about government persecution, human rights violations and State control of Buddhist institutions.

Thich Nguyen Giac graduated from the University of Saigon in 1973 with a MA in philosophy. He devoted much time working on Buddhist studies and was involved in the compilation of the first ever Sanskrit-Vietnamese dictionary. He was arrested on 2 April 1984 along with 11 other Buddhist monks and nuns who were accused of membership of an illegal organisation.

Thich Duc Nhuan was arrested in August 1985. He was held in detention without trial until September 1988 when he appeared, along with other Buddhists, before the People's Court in Ho Chi Minh City charged with 'subversive activities against the people's authority'. He was sentenced to 10 years imprisonment. He is believed to have been seriously ill in 1989 and his present state of health is unknown.

Most Venerable Thich Huyen Quang became Executive Vice-President of the UVBC in Vietnam in 1974. In February 1982 he was arrested and subsequently banished to his native village where he is still held under house arrest. The authorities said his presence in Ho Chi Minh City was 'too dangerous for the safety and well-being of the people'. Prior to his latest arrest he had, along with Thich Quang Do, been previously arrested in 1977 and temporarily released in 1979 before being re-arrested in October 1981 for 'obstructing the work of the Department for the Campaign for the Unification of Vietnamese Buddhists'.

Thich Tri Sieu, historian and author, was arrested in April 1984 and accused of membership of an illegal organisation. He was sentenced to death in September 1988 but his sentence was later commuted to 20 years imprisonment by the Supreme People's Court. He is believed to be imprisoned in a re-education camp in Dong Nai province.

Professor Thich Tue Sy was also arrested in April 1984 and was brought to trial in September 1988, with Thich Tri Sieu and 19 others who were accused of leading a counter-revolutionary organisation. He too was originally sentenced to death, but in November 1988 his sentence was commuted to 20 years imprisonment. In December 1989 he was reportedly transferred to a remote re-education camp in Phu Khanh province.

Thich Thien Tan became abbot of the temple of Thuyen Ton in Hue city in 1972. He was reportedly arrested in August 1978 and tried in March 1980 by the People's Court in Hue. He was charged with political participation in rebellious activities and sentenced to life imprisonment. He is currently imprisoned in the A20 re-education camp in Phu Khanh.

Thich Phuc Vien was reportedly arrested in Hue in June 1980. He is believed to have been charged with political participation in rebellious activities, tried by the People's Court in Hue in September 1980, and sentenced to 20 years imprisonment. It is thought that he is being held in Phu Khanh, in the same re-education camp as Thich Thien Tan and Thich Tue Sy.

These are not violent or dangerous men. They are prisoners of conscience who have been arrested and detained simply because of their non-violent religious activities and beliefs. They and others like them have been subjected to years of intolerance, discrimination, violation and abuse. They have had their property destroyed or confiscated and their rights to practise their religion forcefully repressed and deliberately curtailed by successive governments. Their continued detention, and the violence perpetrated against
them and the religious community of which they are members, are blatant and unacceptable denials of articles 17, 18, 19, 20, 21 and 22 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and deserve the strongest condemnation.

Finally, although the motion we are considering today refers only to the United Vietnamese Buddhist Congregation, it is very important to remember that the denial of freedom of expression, association, thought, conscience and religion do not apply only to the Buddhists in Vietnam. Members of other religious denominations, including the Christian churches, both Protestant and Catholic, and writers, poets, journalists, politicians, civil servants and business and professional people whose views do not coincide with those of past or present Vietnamese governments have also suffered, and continue to suffer, for their beliefs. They too are entitled to liberty and justice, the return of their property, and the restoration of their rights. In the cause of religious tolerance, understanding and freedom for all people, I commend this motion to the House.

Mrs CROSIO (Prospect) (10.53 a.m.)—I do not believe that there is one person in this Parliament or in the community at large who would not support the motion before the House. In the last 30 minutes we have heard a very brief history of Vietnam and what has occurred. We have also heard about the United Nations charter on human rights. But I think that when we have anything like this recorded in the House we need a little honesty about how the motion came about.

All of us have been approached by numerous members of the Vietnamese community. In particular, I recollect very early in the piece when the representative here in Canberra, the Venerable Thich Quang Ba, came with petitions for presentation to this Parliament. I spoke with him at that time, as did a number of other members—in particular, I recollect, the honourable member for Forde (Ms Crawford). We explained to him that the way those petitions had been prepared was not the way the Parliament would accept them and that, rather than waste all the time and effort that had been put into the preparation of the petitions, we would deliver them directly to the Speaker, the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Senator Gareth Evans), and particularly the Prime Minister (Mr Keating).

I was very concerned when the Venerable Thich Quang Ba told me that the honourable member for Dundas (Mr Ruddock) had said that it was all right and that he would be putting it to the House. I told him that I did not know how he was going to do that, because the way those petitions were prepared was not the way this House would accept them. I was very surprised when within three days I found that they had become a notice of motion under the name of the honourable member for Dundas.

We have to have a little honesty when we are making representations, particularly on private members' matters. I am not denying any of the feeling and the principle behind the address we have heard today, but I do not believe that the honourable member for Dundas, in speaking to the motion, should have read almost verbatim from a letter sent to all of us by the Most Venerable Thich Phuoc Hue who, as all would realise, is the patriarch of the United Vietnamese Buddhist Congregation of Australia and New Zealand. As the honourable member for Dundas realises, though the honourable member for Casey (Mr Halverson) may not, the Most Venerable Thich Thuoc Hue has his temple within my electorate of Prospect. The building of that temple took a lot of hard work; we acknowledged what they had come from and where they should go.

I am very appreciative that a motion like this has come forward, and that there are so many people who will support it. What we have to recognise is that our Government's human rights policies have, in a large part, grown from the Australian community's values. We also have to acknowledge now that there are something like 100,000 Australian Vietnamese settled within our community. The Most Venerable Thich Thuoc Hue, for example, came out in 1981-82 when a lot of them fled Vietnam following the fall of Saigon. But that, of course, was in 1975—as history tells us.
If one looks back at the last 30-odd years, one will see that the discrimination and the persecution that the Buddhist people have had in Vietnam has been extreme, with the French as well. The honourable member for Casey mentioned what happened with the Buddhist uprising and when the reign of Diem was overtaken. I also recollect, in reading history, the power and the strength of the Buddhist Church in Vietnam over those particular years.

We have, in this motion, mentioned a number of significant people within the Buddhist faith. I am glad also that previous speakers have mentioned so many other human beings who are still imprisoned and for what, we do not know. We do know that in 1989, for example, between January and June, from two northern provinces about 413 people were just taken away and sentenced for anything up to 12 years. Inquiries have asked, 'For what?', and been answered, 'Oh, they could have been attempting illegal departure'. I do not believe any country in the world can condone this type of action by any government.

I was particularly disturbed too, when we talk about what we should be doing with the motions, that we were not also acknowledging the work that our Government has done in the last five years. Nowhere have the previous speakers mentioned that in the five years just gone we have made about 2,300 representations on human rights issues to some 120 countries.

I believe that we have to support that; we have to encourage that to continue. We cannot, as a country—and as elected representatives of our community who stand up here—condone the actions that are going on in some countries. We have seen what has happened when that has occurred, when people have turned their head and said, 'It’s not affecting me or mine, therefore I won’t become involved'. I know, at times, there is very little that we can as a country do when we see actions such as those which are now being recorded here in the House today. But I believe that what we can do is stand up and be counted.

There are a number of us who, when we have been approached by our communities at large—I notice that the honourable member for Fowler (Mr Grace) has come in, because he and I share a lot of the concerns of our Vietnamese communities within our electorates—have made continual representations and we have seen a number of results from those representations. As I said, we have seen, through representation to the then State Labor Government, the acquisition of land to build the temple. We have seen, again through representation both to our previous State Labor Government and to this Federal Government, the grant to aid workers so that they can get out there and continue to work on a one-to-one basis with their community people. We have seen the expansion of community understanding, of not only the Buddhist faith, but also their striving endeavours to become good Australians. We have encouraged that; but, most importantly, we have provided as a Federal Labor Government the means and the wherewithal in which to do it.

I am sure that the motions that we are now debating in this House, as I said before, are supported by everyone. We have also got to take into account that it came originally from an organisation set up in Paris, the Vietnam Committee on Human Rights. It has, for a great many years now, been pushing to have these Vietnamese—and its community leaders, particularly—released. I know that they would join us when we say that our motion before the House, while it names a number of people in particular, should also include all of those other people from around that country who are still lingering either in gaols or, as it is commonly called, house arrest in their village.

I felt very proud when I read some of the history of the monk that we are talking about. Following the 1977 demonstration—he was one of those who led it—because of what was happening with them in Vietnam and because of the persecution for their Buddhist faith, he was taken with some, I believe, six other monks at that particular time and was tried for being a very influential person. There was no other reason given.
It was interesting also to see, when one reads about that particular uprising, that Thich Huyen Quang was the church's last chairman. He was in charge of the Buddhist reconstruction activities. I do not believe that, because of what his action was then, he should have been imprisoned for as long as he was. He was released in 1982, and he is still under house arrest in his village.

That same year that we are talking about, 1977, saw some 80 per cent of all Buddhist priests and nuns stripped of their religious status. In fact, in 1978 we found that over 1,300 monks and nuns in that country, from something like 486 pagodas, were being forced to do either agricultural or other labour. We cannot condone that; we must continue to condemn it. We also must continue to condemn the illegal activities that are still going on in that particular country. I believe that history will record for a long time what has occurred. But let us not repeat what we have seen happen, and we will have that repeated all over the world if we, in free countries, do not stand up and condemn their action.

In supporting the sentiments of this motion, I particularly support the activities and the actions taken by the Most Venerable Thich Phuoc Hue, a very genteel, gentle man who is the leader of the Vietnamese community, as I have stated before, throughout Australia and New Zealand. He has shown by guidance and he has shown by example what can be achieved. We do not do it by cheap political point scoring, we do it by being humanly concerned and involved. We do it by taking the action when it occurs, not by delaying it two months or three months and bringing a motion before this House. We do it by taking deputations to the Ministers. We do it by having representations with the Ministers. We do it by taking people such as the Minister for Immigration, Local Government and Ethnic Affairs (Mr Hand), as I have done just recently, to the temple to meet the people, to listen to these people, to listen to their concerns. I believe that that is how actions are taken by all governments at all government levels, and that is how it should be done.

It should be done with a united voice. We should also be united in condemning the recent and continuing actions, which were mentioned by the honourable member for Dundas, in what was Yugoslavia. We have to stand up and be counted in condemnation of this. We cannot continue to condone it, and I believe we must take further action on this matter.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Les Scott)—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 Thursday.

SELF-DETERMINATION OF TIBET

Mr COBB (Parkes) (11.03 a.m.)—I move:

That this House:

(1) notes with pleasure the recent visit to Australia of the Dalai Lama, spiritual and temporal leader of Tibet and Nobel Peace Prize Laureate;

(2) recognises that Tibet, including those areas incorporated into the Chinese provinces of Sichuan, Yunnan, Gansu and Qinghai, is an occupied country under established principles of international law; and

(3) supports the UN Resolution 1723 of 1963 calling for the cessation of practices which deprive the Tibetan people of their freedom, including their right to self-determination.

During late April and early May this year, Australia was honoured with a visit to our country of the Dalai Lama, the spiritual and temporal leader of Tibet and Nobel Peace Prize laureate. Those of us who watched his news conferences on TV or actually had the pleasure of meeting him in Parliament House, as I did, could not have failed to have been impressed with the dignity, composure and wisdom of this very remarkable man.

Born Lhamo Thondup on 6 July 1935, though later adopting the more traditional Dalai Lama name of Tenzin Gyatso, he is today 57 years old. He was born at Taktser in what was far north-eastern Tibet. His parents were small farmers. They grew barley, buckwheat and potatoes, raised sheep, goats, horses, yaks and chickens, and had six dzomos, which are a yak-cow cross. Their house was built of mud and stone with a flat roof. The
guttering was made from branches of juniper wood. He was the ninth of 16 children, though only seven lived. He is held to be the reincarnation of the previous 13 Dalai Lamas, the first of whom was born in 1351 AD.

As the world knows, in 1949, when the Dalai Lama was only 14 years old, Communist China illegally invaded Tibet against the will of the local Tibetans. So repressive was that occupation that on 31 March 1959 the Dalai Lama was forced to flee from Tibet to India at the still tender age of 24. He has been in exile ever since, fighting for his country's independence. Tragically, some 87,000 Tibetans died at the hands of the Chinese following the 1959 disturbances, in the period March 1959 to September 1960.

The Chinese argue that they have a right to be there as Tibet is part of China. I believe it is time that this Parliament clearly stated that this argument is a nonsense. Tibet has never been part of China. Indeed, Tibet has ancient claims to large parts of China itself. Tibet and China have ethnically and racially distinct peoples. They speak different languages, the Tibetan script is nothing like the Chinese script and they are geographically different.

Prior to China's invasion, Tibet enjoyed a fully functioning government. It had a set of complex bureaucratic and political institutions which are normal for an independent sovereign state. It operated a mint, produced its own postage stamps, maintained a standing army, administered the justice system, and conducted its own foreign affairs and had treaties with several countries. Tibet even issued passports and had its own flag, a copy of which I have with me here today.

In short, Tibet satisfied every criteria of the United Nations and international legal standards that would allow it to have the right to self-determination as an independent state. In 1961 the United Nations voted unequivocally that Tibet had a clear right to self-determination. It was a vote of 56 to 10, and Australia voted for that, I might add. The International Commission of Jurists also confirmed that at a later time.

There is no doubt that every independent survey of Tibet confirms that China is there illegally and that it should get out. In fact, the 40-odd years of Chinese occupation of Tibet have been amongst the most brutal and barbaric in the whole history of the human race. It is a blot on China's history that mars its record and brings into question the right of the Chinese to claim even to be members of the human race. Since 1949, their record of occupation has been one of cruel repression, taking tyranny and shameful behaviour past the limits of the imagination of normal human beings.

A long chronicle of China's savage inhumanities can be found documented in the numerous reports of Amnesty International and Lawasia journals. I recommend that honourable members read some of the reports in them. They are amongst the saddest chapters man has ever written and, sadly, extra pages are still being recorded today.

After occupation, China embarked upon a reign of terror and repression rarely seen. Apart from slaughtering 1.2 million individuals—and I remind honourable members that the population of Tibet is only six million in total—the Chinese have done everything they can to destroy the Tibetan culture and beat the population into submission.

In 1960 the International Commission of Jurists reported that China had violated 16 articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and was guilty of genocide in Tibet. To quote the Dalai Lama—and I recommend that honourable members read his autobiography, Freedom in Exile—on page 136 he says:

> The methods that the Chinese used to intimidate the population were so abhorrent that they were almost beyond the capacity of my imagination. It was not until I read the report published in 1959 by the International Commission of Jurists that I fully accepted what I had heard: crucifixion, vivisection, disembowelling and dismemberment of victims was commonplace. So too were beheading, burning, beating to death and burying alive, not to mention dragging people behind galloping horses until they died or hanging them upside down or throwing them bound hand and foot into icy water. And, in order to prevent them shouting out, 'Long live the Dalai Lama', on the way to execution, they tore out their tongues with meat hooks.

It is interesting to reflect today on what the feelings of the Dalai Lama are towards the Chinese. Again I quote from his book:
Early every morning, as I sat in prayer in my room before the ancient altar with its clutter of statuettes standing in silent benediction, I concentrated hard on developing compassion for all sentient beings. I reminded myself constantly of the Buddha's teaching that our enemy is in a sense our greatest teacher. And if this was sometimes hard to do, I never really doubted that it was so.

The Chinese have destroyed over 6,000 monasteries and nunneries. They have looted them and reduced them to rubble. Religion has been largely repressed and religious leaders tortured, and indeed the Panchen Lama was imprisoned and tortured to the point of driving him to attempt suicide more than once. Tibetans were reduced to eating leaves and grass; racial discrimination was practised in hospitals and schools; the Tibetan culture was suppressed and the environment was largely destroyed.

Whole forests have been logged indiscriminately, leading to massive erosion. There has been shooting and confiscation of people's livestock; there has been decimation of their unique wildlife. Villages in some cases have been razed. In his book the Dalai Lama mentions a description given to him by his junior personal physician. The Dalai Lama says:

He told me of how he and his fellow prisoners were forced to consume their own clothing for food and how one inmate, with whom he was in hospital at one time, was so desperate that when he passed a worm in his meagre stool, he washed it and ate it.

As well as that, in a process of Sinocisation, the Chinese have moved 7.5 million of their people into Tibet, outnumbering the six million Tibetans who live there. As the Dalai Lama says in his book:

My countrymen and women are today in grave danger of becoming nothing more than a tourist attraction in their own country.

The final insult is that China has incorporated about half of the original Tibet into China permanently, leaving only the Tibet Autonomous Region by name, but it is also under Chinese rule and officially part of China. Indeed, where the present Dalai Lama was born is now shown on maps as part of China. If he were born today he could never become the Dalai Lama because he would be classified as Chinese!

In conclusion, I say that people have often asked me why I bother about this insignificant part of the world. Unlike Kuwait, Tibet has no oil; unlike Afghanistan, Tibet has no strategic position; unlike the eastern European countries, Tibet has no potential trade from which we may benefit in the future. It has no direct relevance to the problems in my electorate. In fact, in one sense it is only a few desolate hectares stuck somewhere up on a mountain plain at the back of the Himalayas. People even argue that standing up for these people will somehow annoy China and damage our trade with the Chinese and we should tug our forelock to them.

I regret to say that I have no glib answer to such an argument. I bother only because I care. If we believe in freedom, if we adhere to the philosophy and principles of self-determination, if we really mean what we sometimes say in this place about human rights, and if we cherish the diversity of spirit and culture and lifestyle that is embodied in the people of the Tibetan nation, I hope that we could somehow find it within ourselves to support their cause, and that we would simply do so for no other reason than that it is the right thing to do. I urge honourable members to support this motion before them today. (Time expired)

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Les Scott)—Is there a seconder for the motion?  
Mr Cadman—I second the motion.

Mr CAMPBELL (Kalgoorlie) (11.13 a.m.)—How true it is that history belongs to those who write it. It is also becoming increasingly true that history is a matter of opinion, that truth itself is a matter of opinion. If one looks at the history of Tibet, it has always been part of greater China. China has always had suzerainty over Tibet and it was with China that the British determined the boundaries with India. Generally I would like people to resolve their own affairs, but I am a realist who has to live in the real world and it is quite clear that China will never forgo its sovereignty over Tibet.

Let us look at what has actually happened. There is no doubt that in 1959 Mao Tse Tung unleashed a very uncivilised policy there. I think that under Mao Tse Tung the treatment
of Tibetans was bad, but the Chinese people also were treated badly. I do not think that reflects any great credit on Mao Tse Tung. However, I recall that many of the people in Australia who are today throwing up their arms in horror about the situation in Tibet were the very people lionising Mao Tse Tung and seeing in him some sort of example. I think that since those days the Chinese Government has actually striven very hard to improve conditions in Tibet.

It is all very well for honourable members opposite to glibly talk about freedom in Tibet. What was the freedom in Tibet? It was a theocracy of the most regressive kind, where all the land was owned by the people in power and that power was the aristocracy, the bureaucracy and the leading monks. That is where the power resided. Five per cent of the people had all the power, owned all the land and most of the livestock. Slavery was a fact of life and the condition of the people in Tibet was appalling.

The reality is that since China has been there, for better or worse, agricultural land in Tibet has increased by one-third—some 3.4 million mus or about 23,000 hectares. It is not a lot of land but productivity on that land has also risen. Figures I have been reading show that productivity went from something like 1.6 tonnes of grain per hectare to almost eight tonnes per hectare, which is rivalling some of the European crops. That increase is very large, and whether it is sustainable in the long term remains to be seen, but a lot of it has been done by the introduction of insecticides. I notice the Greens with their bottom lips quivering and in a tremble in rage at the thought of using insecticides. The fact is that they have increased productivity and, for the people of Tibet, that has been immensely valuable. The material things in Tibet have probably increased dramatically.

There are spiritual things that obviously they do not like. By my experience, there are two sorts of freedom in this world: political freedom and economic freedom. If one offers people political freedom or economic freedom, they will take economic freedom because most people know that, in the long run, economic freedom buys political freedom. Political freedom does not necessarily buy economic freedom and one can see this from the example of our own Aboriginal people who have had absolute political freedom bestowed upon them but have not been able to capitalise on it.

When we hear these horrendous stories, I am reminded of what is happening in the media. We hear these horrendous stories coming out of Yugoslavia which are run by a pooled media, by all journalists. As the stories are run, they grow in credence and in horror. I am reminded of the fact that I recently saw a picture in one of the Australian papers of a Yugoslavian village which had been destroyed by the Serbs. A week later I saw a video taken directly off the news in Yugoslavia of that same village, this time with Yugoslavians saying that it was a Serbian village destroyed by Muslims. The truth is very plastic.

When I hear some of the horror stories described by the honourable members opposite, I tend to take them with a grain of salt. I believe that the material position of the people in Tibet has risen enormously. I do not know of any society where theocracy has been good for people in the long run. In our own culture we threw off theocracy years ago, and it was clearly for the benefit of the people. One should remember that in our own culture—or in the British culture of which we are descendants—we destroyed the monasteries and pulled down a lot of those positions of wealth.

It is possible that the oppression in our culture was nothing like as great as the oppression in Tibet but, to say that the people are oppressed now—which they may be—and to ignore the fact that they were oppressed before, is an absolute distortion of history. They had no rights and they had no freedom unless they were in that elitist group. It is that elitist group that is trumpeting its pain to the world. In my view, it is a pain that they deserve. If there is a God—a concept I very much doubt—then perhaps it is God’s judgment on these people for the way that they had taken this land and not developed it.

Britain and the United States were both guilty of trying to make Tibet a separate
country after the war. It was in their interest
to divide China. I say that it is not in the
world’s interest to divide China any more
than it is in the world’s interest to divide the
countries of Europe. Less than a year ago we
were rejoicing about the break-up of the
Soviet Union. I warned then that it could be
a catastrophe, and I believe that it will be.

What we are seeing in Europe now is the
eastern expansion of the new German empire.
I see grave dangers for Europe. It is clear
that, with another 60 years of unity, Yugos-
lavia may have survived as a country. It will
not survive in isolation. Croatia will become
part of Germany—under German influence—and
Slovenia will become part of the Austrian
empire again. The only country in Yugoslavia
with enough size to survive is Serbia. The
misrepresentation that we have had amongst
journalists is an outrage, not only in Australia
but in the world. I suspect very strongly that
the same is true of Tibet.

It is very handy to have a whipping horse,
and unfortunately the Chinese have probably
given sufficient grounds to put some truth
into that. But China’s efforts now are to
improve conditions in Tibet. Nobody can
doubt that the availability of education in
Tibet is much better than it was under
predecessors. Things are improving in Tibet,
and I believe they can go on improving. I
believe that the process taking place in Tibet
is painful, but it was probably inevitable. I
believe that out of this process we will get a
new educated class in Tibet, able to hold up
their heads and able to have some form of say
in their own government. The truth is that the
average Tibetan had no say in his previous
government, so even if he does not have
complete control he is likely to have more
control than he ever had before.

Anyone who tries to tell people who are in
absolute bondage and who could never escape
from the oppression and indignity of absolute
poverty that they are worse off will have a
very hard job. But theirs is not the voice we
hear in this world. We hear the voice of the
well-to-do—the voice of the dispossessed
middle class. That is what we are hearing.
Before I am prepared to support this motion—
before I am prepared to condemn China in
such absolute terms—I want to go there and
have a good look and talk to the ordinary
people. I do not want to talk to those people
in exile, for it is clear where they came from.
I think we all have to be really serious about
this. People who go to China can see the
enormous changes that are taking place in
China. They can see how the oppressive
regime of Mao has been lifted by
governments since that time, and how in-
dividual liberty in China has expanded. I have
seen that. I have been going to China since
1984, and the changes are incredible.

There was a hiccup in Tiananmen Square.
It was a foolish thing. Clearly, if those
students had gone home a week before they
would have had a great triumph; but those
students believed, looking down the barrels of
Western TV cameras, that they had power.
They never had any power. People have got
to understand the homogeneity of China. It is
one of the most united countries in the world,
and that is because the Chinese are universal-
ly of the same ethnic origin. People in China
say themselves that the students were foolish.
They presented a grand opportunity to a
certain element in China to show the world
that it was going to maintain that strong,
united front.

It is interesting that in China we have not
seen the break-up we have seen in eastern
Europe. That is why we see people on those
trains flocking to China to buy the com-
modities they cannot get in their own
countries. I think we ought to be very careful
before we endorse this motion. I am certainly
not one for theocracies. I have seen them do
no good in this world, and I believe the
oppression that existed was probably worse
than that which exists now.

Mr CADMAN (Mitchell) (11.23 a.m.)—I
thank the honourable member for Kalgoorlie
(Mr Campbell) for opening up another facet
to the debate. It is one that I would not have
suspected of him. I would not have suspected
his capacity to judge others in his own right
and to state very clearly whether they are
right or wrong and whether they should suffer
or they should not suffer. He dismisses God
and puts himself in God’s place. It was a very
strange speech, and quite beyond the facts.
After 40 years of Chinese subjugation, there is no doubt that Tibet and the rest of China remain subject to a totalitarian government, controlled centrally and dominated by the army. It is the power of the leaders that keeps the average citizens in their place and prevents them from having the freedoms that the rest of the world enjoys. After the whole period of communism in eastern and central Europe, we now see an emerging and dynamic group of countries. They have difficulties, but they are throwing off the yokes and shackles of the dominating classes and are now exercising true freedoms. This is a wonderful, challenging and exciting thing. No longer are individuals oppressed, but individuals have the freedoms that the rest of the world enjoys.

What we are arguing today, and what I believe is the proposition that is before the House, is that the people of Tibet should have those same sorts of opportunities that the people in eastern and central Europe have had: they should have the right of self-determination—the right to move ahead towards independence and a democratic process.

China has failed to take up the challenge that was expressed by Gorbachev in the concept of perestroika. Nobody in that Sino peninsula has moved from the totalitarian stance they had before the break-up of communism in the former Soviet republics. They have refused to do so because they wish to subjugate and control. One country after another could be nominated but leading the ranks in totalitarianism and in subjugation of their people by force are China, Vietnam and Cambodia. In Cambodia the slight changes we have seen appear now to be disappearing back into a totalitarian process. But certainly in China and Vietnam there is no movement allowing people freedom of expression.

Since the incorporation of Tibet within the People's Republic occurred 40 years ago it appears now to the Chinese rulers that the process is irreversible. It is interesting that despite the propaganda coming from China in this regard, despite the exercise of power seen in Tiananmen Square, despite the exercise of control, we see the Australian Government failing to respond in a sensible and firm way, and in a way in which most Australians would expect.

The Government, and the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Senator Gareth Evans) in particular, can froth at the mouth when South Africa is mentioned. Following a visit to Tibet by a parliamentary delegation and having received from his own colleagues a full report of the situation there, the Minister on 9 September 1991 said these weak words:

For its part, the Australian Government will certainly follow through on the representations taken up by the delegation in both Beijing and Lhasa, and will continue to press for information and express its concerns over individual human rights cases using these channels.

That is the weakest statement any Australian Foreign Minister has ever made against a totalitarian state controlling others.

Despite the comments by the honourable member for Kalgoorlie, we can document the abuse of human rights step by step, from 1950-51 right through to the current day and including really dreadful circumstances outlined by my colleague as recently as 1987, 1989 and 1990. We can see the subjugation and abuse of people and yet the Minister concerned has such a weak response.

The Prime Minister (Mr Keating), when he met the Dalai Lama, jumped on the bandwagon of dusting down China with a feather. The Prime Minister said the Government wanted to encourage some sort of autonomous situation in Tibet. The Prime Minister said, and it is reported in the publication Australian Tibet Council News:

... that although Australia recognised China's sovereignty over Tibet, the Government wanted to encourage "some sort of autonomous situation in Tibet, with respect of local culture and respect of human rights", according to Government sources.

Mr Cobb—That is pathetic.

Mr CADMAN—It is pathetic, there is no doubt about it. Yet they come in here and want to ban trade, ban sporting contact, ban everything they can think of against South Africa. They want the United Nations to take action in Yugoslavia. We participated, thankfully, in the situation in the Middle East.
We have some real Sinophiles on that side. They followed Whitlam and they have been enraptured with China ever since. Anybody who criticises China and its behaviour in some sections of the Australian Labor Party is seen as being absolutely off his rocker. They will back China through thick and thin. It is a cultural attraction that they have for things Chinese. They have visited there and they are enthralled by things Chinese. Many Australians are also so enthralled but that does not blind us, and nor should it ever blind us, to the faults of those who are not friends but with whom we have an association.

A friendship of integrity cannot be maintained if one fails to criticise and take action against a friend who is damaging somebody or something that is harmless. The Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade is a classic at that. He has a precept for judging where everybody in the world stands: his standards. China is one area that can do no wrong; South Africa is one that will always do wrong. If one looks at the speeches the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade has made since he became Foreign Minister, one sees that he has had a penchant for basing foreign policy on personal judgment. He has not based his judgments on what is in Australia’s interests—whether it will gain or advantage Australia or whether change can be brought about—but on whether he agrees with the person in charge and likes his or her political philosophy.

The Australian Government has a weak-kneed attitude to China in regard to affairs in Tibet. It is criminal of the Australian Government to do this. I know that many members of the Australian Labor Party supporting this motion do not agree completely with the line the Government is taking. They would like the Government to be stronger in its expression of support for the people of Tibet. They reject the Sinocisation of Tibet whereby, for instance, 7.1 million Chinese people have been moved into an area with a population of six million. They deplore the efforts by China to subjugate—take over and change—the ethnic mix and, over a period, destroy Tibet’s culture. They deplore the destruction of the temples throughout Tibet, the treatment that has been meted out to individuals and to religious leaders, and the treatment of the Dalai Lama by the Government of China, and they support the Dalai Lama’s proposal that Tibet become independent and free.

We see a gap between the real feelings of many within the Australian Labor Party and the expressions of their Government. Unfortunately, the Prime Minister, guided by the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, has adopted a weak and wishy-washy attitude to the situation in Tibet. That is a shameful thing for the Australian nation. I would like to hear honourable members opposite make a commitment to freedom, democracy and independence for the nation of Tibet.

Mr LEE (Dobell) (11.33 a.m.)—I commend the honourable member for Parkes (Mr Cobb) for bringing this motion before the House. I disagree with a few comments made by my colleague and friend the honourable member for Kalgoorlie (Mr Campbell) and my colleague across the chamber the honourable member for Mitchell (Mr Cadman). I will now clear up those comments in my contribution.

The honourable member for Mitchell lashed the Government for being weak-kneed in its attitude to Tibet. I think there are honourable members on both sides of the House who believe that all governments—the Australian Government, the US Government, the British Government, governments in the Third World—should be doing more to put pressure on China about the human rights violations in Tibet.

The honourable member for Mitchell is very cheeky in criticising the Labor Party for being weak-kneed in its attitude to Tibet. I suspect that he might have been a member of the last Liberal-National Party Government when a certain Prime Minister—Malcolm Fraser—was all over the Chinese like a rash. As Malcolm Fraser saw the world stage, Russia was a threat—the Soviet Union was invading Afghanistan—and, if the Chinese were against the Russians, Malcolm Fraser would do all he could to improve relations with China.
Who was the Minister for Foreign Affairs in the Fraser Government? It was the honourable member for Kooyong (Mr Peacock), the former Leader of my colleague the honourable member for Mitchell. I mention the honourable member for Kooyong because he can hold his head up high on human rights issues. He resigned from the Fraser Cabinet because it refused to stop recognising the Pol Pot regime in Cambodia. That was a brave act by the honourable member for Kooyong on a matter of principle. It demonstrated his concern about the then Fraser Government not being prepared to take a stand.

In that light it is perhaps more balanced to say that all governments, Labor or Liberal, sometimes deserve a bit of a prod because they are not doing enough to raise human rights issues. That is why I welcome the contribution from my colleague the honourable member for Parkes.

The motion he moved today notes with pleasure the recent visit to Australia of the Dalai Lama, the spiritual and temporal leader of Tibet and the Nobel Peace Prize laureate. Like many other members of this House, I had the honour of meeting the Dalai Lama at a closed session of the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade. That was certainly a privilege for me. I was pleased that the Prime Minister (Mr Keating) agreed to meet the Dalai Lama despite, I understand, some concerns expressed by the Chinese representative in Australia. I understand the Prime Minister told the Dalai Lama that the Government would consider an application to establish a Tibetan information office in this country. That is a proposal that I strongly support.

I turn briefly to some comments made by the honourable member for Kalgoorlie. He made the point that the standard of living has probably improved dramatically in Tibet since the Chinese occupation about 40 years ago, as, I suppose, living standards have improved in many parts of the world, whether in democratic or totalitarian countries. The public officials responsible for the changes that have resulted in improved agricultural production and a better distribution of land should be commended and I welcome those changes.

At the same time, I think people throughout the world have the right to express concern about some of the horrific human rights violations that have allegedly occurred in Tibet. The reason why we have that right is that we have a long tradition of Westminster parliaments and Western democracies where human rights have been advanced step by step over hundreds of years. It began with the Magna Carta in Britain at a time when there were still slaves and serfs. The Magna Carta did not automatically give everyone perfect human rights; it was many hundreds of years before an elected parliament had the right to pass laws for Great Britain. Reforms such as the Declaration of the Rights of Man during the French Revolution advanced human rights issues a step further, despite the fact that there were one or two human rights violations during the French Revolution after the Declaration of the Rights of Man.

More recently, in the 1940s, the UN Declaration of Human Rights, I believe, set the standard by which we should be judging not only ourselves but also other countries to ensure that human rights are advanced for people wherever they may live. That declaration gives people freedom of speech, freedom of religious worship and the right to certain political freedoms. We believe that these are the freedoms which the people of Tibet are not able to exercise.

Given the massive change we have seen throughout the world in the last five years or so, we have the right to increase pressure on a country such as China. Look at what has happened in Czechoslovakia and other countries in eastern and central Europe. There is now the right of free speech in the former Soviet Union—a nation where people were previously afraid to speak freely to their relatives and to people who lived in the same block of units for fear that someone from the secret police might knock on their door in the middle of the night and have them shanghaied to a police cell indefinitely. Multi-party democracies are being formed in Africa in places, notwithstanding that many people—perhaps even the honourable member for
Parkes—were concerned that they could not have developed for many decades to come. We can be optimistic about changes that have taken place in parts of the world where many of us thought those developments could never take place. It is with that background that I think we have every right to raise our concern about human rights violations in Tibet.

The honourable member for Parkes mentioned that over 6,000 monasteries and nunneries have been closed in Tibet by the Chinese authorities in an attempt to discourage free religious worship in that country. We could imagine the outcry that would take place in Australia if the Government decided unilaterally to close down the overwhelming majority of churches of whatever faith in our country.

Of even greater concern to me is the very serious allegations which have been made about the torture and, in some cases, the death of prisoners who have been arrested and detained for peaceful dissent. Amnesty International has an excellent reputation throughout the world of speaking out for prisoners of conscience. When an organisation such as that expresses its concern about actions which have taken place in China, that gives us very concrete evidence with which to support our statements here today. I quote from a report in the Melbourne Age, dated 21 May 1992. It was an article on an Amnesty International report on human rights in Tibet. It reads:

Chinese authorities are torturing and murdering Tibetan independence activists, their relatives and perhaps even children, according to a report released by Amnesty International.

'Torture is endemic in Tibet,' the human rights group's report says, noting that in recent years there have been 'hundreds of reports by former detainees and eye-witnesses which indicate that peaceful and unarmed Tibetans have been systematically beaten when taken into custody'.

A second quote, which is from the Australian of 18 August 1992, has the following distressful story:

A Tibetan monk has claimed that he was hung from the ceiling of his cell for more than a month after being arrested for his part in a prison protest last year.

The monk, who is in his mid-30s, revealed the torture a few days after his release from a Lhasa jail.

It goes on to give further details. I think that demonstrates the grave concerns all of us have about what has taken place in Tibet. I join other members in this debate in seeking to encourage the Government to continue to put pressure on the authorities in Tibet, whether it is from the former Foreign Minister, Bill Hayden—who upset the Chinese authorities by demanding to visit Tibet, then raised human rights issues with the authorities there—or from the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Mr Gareth Evans), who continues to raise these issue with the Chinese Government. I am sure that he will welcome the fact that honourable members of this House have strengthened his hand by raising this issue today. I hope the authorities at the Chinese Embassy convey our sentiments to the Government of China.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Les Scott)—The time allocated 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 Thursday.

NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AUSTRALIA

Mr LANGMORE (Fraser) (11.43 a.m.)—I move:

That this House supports the establishment of the National Museum of Australia on its present site and the goal of completing construction of the Museum in time for its opening as part of the celebration of the centenary of Federation in 2001.

About a year ago, I sent a letter to all honourable members and honourable senators asking how they thought we could celebrate the centenary of Australian Federation. I suggested to them that a very suitable way to celebrate the centenary would be to build a National Museum of Australia in Canberra. The majority of those who responded wrote back saying that that seemed an excellent idea and they supported it. I take that to be an indication of the strength of support for this proposal within Parliament.

Museums illuminate for us our history, our environment, the relationships between groups within our country and, of course, between our country and other countries in the Asia-
Pacific region and between us and the peoples of those countries. The proposal for a National Museum in Canberra arose as part of the recommendations of the report in 1975 of the Committee of Inquiry on Museums and National Collections, the Pigott report. The proposal was to relate the museum to three things: the first was the history of Aboriginal people; the second, the history of modern settlers in Australia of largely European settlement and, thirdly, the interaction of people and the Australian environment. It would not imitate or duplicate those fields in which the established museums in the States were strong.

The report commented on the growing public interest in Australia's recent history, indicating that this interest was not satisfied by the State museums, which were more orientated towards either natural history or science and technology. Included with the Pigott report was the report of the planning committee on the Gallery of Aboriginal Australia, which would form part of the museum and present the complexity and diversity of Aboriginal culture, transcending the culture of any particular Aboriginal group.

That report was accepted by the Government of the time—the Fraser Government—and was introduced into legislation in the National Museum of Australia Act 1980. When that Bill was debated it received bipartisan support. An interim council was appointed in December 1980 to report within two years on the establishment, location and development of the museum, including a program of construction and costs. The interim council further developed the three themes outlined in the Pigott report, and noted the importance of establishing at the outset continuous and close relationships with representatives of the Aboriginal communities and the need to be different from, yet still to complement, the State museums.

An intensive program of consultations with the Australian museum community and peak museum associations began. Workshops were held on the three themes, as well as a major conference on Australian history, visits to Aboriginal communities, and discussions with Aboriginal organisations. The report of the interim council was tabled in parliament by the Hon. Barry Cohen in May 1983. Both Barry Cohen and the honourable member for Melbourne Ports (Mr Holding) have been strong supporters, not only when they were the Ministers responsible, but ever since.

The report suggested an opening in 1990, with phased construction at a cost of around $92m. The museum would be in the form of a series of pavilions in a landscaped setting, with outdoor exhibition and activity areas to provide an experimental dimension. Further recommendations were that the museum should establish a collection relating to Australia's past, present and future so as to increase Australia's understanding of Australian society and of our natural environment in all stages of development.

It was proposed that the museum should reflect our cultural diversity, and that the Gallery of Aboriginal Australia should provide a focus for the cultural aspirations of Aboriginal people. The museum would comprise the three themes proposed in the Pigott report, which proposed emphasising multiculturalism as an important element of the period since European settlement began. The report recommended that the museum be sited at Yarramundi Reach, which is a beautiful part of virgin grassland on the banks of Lake Burley Griffin, and that an Aboriginal advisory committee should be established.

A director and staff of the museum were appointed in 1984, and a small purpose-built repository was completed in the industrial suburb of Mitchell. This repository was planned as the first stage in the development of storage facilities for the museum's collections. A couple of months ago, I led a group of parliamentarians, from both Houses and all parties, to look at that repository and see some of the collection. I think it would be fair to say that all of us were very impressed by the extent and the great quality of the collection. We were also very concerned that this beautiful collection—a lot of it gained through donations rather than purchases—has not been made available to the people of Australia through a museum. In fact, it is kept locked up there, except for a tiny part on display at Yarramundi Reach. All of us felt
that there was a very strong case for building the museum quickly.

As I have mentioned, a very small display centre has opened already at Yarramundi Reach, but it can have only a tiny exhibition at any one time. At the opening of the third exhibition in that small display centre, the Prime Minister of that time, Bob Hawke, announced his intention to work towards opening the museum in the year 2001, as part of the celebrations of the centenary of Federation. That is a very important promise and undertaking that the Government has made.

In August 1991, the Government did provide an additional $1m and some additional staff to formulate a strategic plan for the development of the museum for opening in 2001. Those funds are now being used for that purpose. It will be vital that in the Budget next year decisions be announced, based on that strategic planning, for the construction of the museum because otherwise there will not be time to have it done by the year 2001.

There have been considerable achievements in the museum already. For example, the national museum's collection already comprises a nucleus that was acquired by government authorities before the formation of the museum was announced. Also, the national ethnographic collection was transferred to the museum in 1984. The museum now has a collection of about 200,000 objects, an extraordinary collection, much of which is the result of donations. That demonstrates the interest in the community with preserving evidence of our past culture. It already has one of the largest and most important collections of bark paintings in Australia and has particularly significant collections in the areas of ethnic heritage, political history, recreation and leisure pursuits and the peace movement, to name but a few.

Several small exhibitions have already been held and I have already talked about those. Tens of thousands of people have already visited the small building on the Yarramundi site. In March 1990, the museum staged a 'Made in Australia' exhibition at the National Convention Centre. That was visited by 26,000 people over a 10-day period. A program of loans has been initiated, and the museum has already lent over 2,000 objects.

Already, even with extremely limited resources, the museum has a substantial set of achievements. Clearly, there is support for it in this House and in the wider community, and I hope that this debate will draw attention to that support.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER—Is the motion seconded?

Mr Snow—I second the motion and reserve my right to speak at a later stage in the debate.

Mr REID (Bendigo) (11.52 a.m.)—I welcome the opportunity to speak on the motion brought forward by the honourable member for Fraser (Mr Langmore) today, because the motion recognises the importance of celebrating the centenary of Federation in the year 2001. I do so as the member for Bendigo and I have a vested interest in the celebrations because one of the principal architects of the Constitution and the Federation, Sir John Quick, was the first Federal member for Bendigo. As the current member for Bendigo, I am honoured to follow Sir John Quick.

Sir John Quick made an important contribution to Australia through his work on the Federation Bill and ensuring that it passed through various State parliaments and was put into effect. I want to quote from an article which appeared in the Bendigo Advertiser on 28 December 1985. It is headlined 'Quick, a man of purpose doing his duty'. It goes on to relate the important role that Sir John Quick took in Federation. It indicates that he became deeply involved in the activities of the Australian Natives Association and at the same time in the wider issue of the federation of Australian colonies.

Federation became the burning issue in the late nineteenth century and Quick gave form and articulation to the thinking of its proponents. He played a key role in preliminary conventions and, with Robert P. Garran, was responsible for the drafting of the Australian Constitution. For his role in the
Federation movement and its achievement, Sir John Quick received a knighthood in 1901. That was the same year that he was elected as Bendigo's first representative in the new Federal Parliament. In recognition of his status and the amount of work that he had done on the Constitution and in the Federation movement, he was not opposed at that election. It was rather an unusual set of circumstances and was a fitting tribute to the fine work that he had done during his career on the movement of Federation.

Sir John Quick gave long service to the electorate of Bendigo and was an ornament to Parliament. During his career in the Federal Parliament, he was Chairman of the Royal Commission into Tariffs. Tariffs are a very topical item at the moment in discussions on industry policy in this nation. He also held the Postmaster-General's portfolio, which was a very important position in government circles during those times.

As we consider the celebrations for the centenary of Federation, it is important that we also celebrate the work of Sir John Quick, who made his home in Bendigo. By a remarkable coincidence, I reside in the same suburb of Bendigo, Quarry Hill, as Sir John Quick did. In fact, many of the organisations which Sir John Quick belonged to reveal to me that he and I shared many interests. He was one of the main instigators of the golf club in Quarry Hill and in later years I became a member of that golf club also. I was unaware of Sir John Quick's involvement in a lot of organisations which I have subsequently taken an interest in.

I am pleased to say that the members of the Bendigo community, under the auspices of the Bendigo City Council, have already established a Sir John Quick Committee to develop Bendigo's response to the centenary of Federation. I welcome this opportunity to follow the honourable member for Fraser, because Bendigo has played a very significant part in the Federation, and the work of the Bendigo committee of the Australian Natives Association in fact pre-empted the meeting held at Corowa, where delegates of the Australian Natives Association passed substantial resolutions which were put forward by Sir John Quick. Mr Barkly Hyett from Bendigo was also involved in putting forward those resolutions to the Australian Natives Association conference at Corowa.

In view of the role played by Bendigo in the Federation and constitutional process, I have taken the opportunity to extend an invitation to Her Majesty the Queen, Queen Elizabeth II, to visit the city of Bendigo during the Federation celebrations in the year 2001. I first extended that invitation early in 1990 upon being elected to this chamber. I took the opportunity to write to the then Prime Minister, Mr Hawke, early in 1990 extending an invitation to Her Majesty to visit Australia and to attend the Federation celebrations in Australia, both in Canberra and in the city of Bendigo, because of the role that Bendigo and Sir John Quick played in this very important constitutional process. I received a response from Prime Minister Hawke indicating receipt of that invitation.

I also have recently taken up the opportunity to write to the present Prime Minister (Mr Keating) requesting that he also write to Her Majesty the Queen reinforcing that invitation to ensure that it is properly on record. I believe that this is one of the most significant moments in Australia's history and that the Queen should be in Australia for the celebrations of that event. I am hopeful that not only will the Queen visit Canberra for the celebrations but she will also visit the city of Bendigo, and the members of the Bendigo community and the Sir John Quick Committee will have the opportunity of greeting and meeting the Queen during that visit.

I am also encouraging the city of Bendigo to seek representation on the Committee of the Constitutional Centenary Foundation. This organisation has been set up to examine ways in which the centenary of Federation and the constitutional changes can be celebrated. I encourage the city of Bendigo to seek representation on that committee.

The development of Australia's Constitution and the Federation of this nation are important milestones in our history and they are certainly worthy of celebration. I hope and trust that all honourable members of this House remain in good health. They will then
be able to join in those celebrations. I know that the honourable member for Fraser would like to participate in the celebration of those events in Canberra. I do not know whether he proposes to remain the member until that time.

Mr Langmore—Of course.

Mr Reid—He does. I certainly look forward to enjoying the good health that will enable me to continue in the role of member for Bendigo and enable me to participate in those celebrations of the centenary. I trust that all honourable members will support the centenary of Federation, which is a very important milestone in Australia's history.

Mr Snow (Eden-Monaro) (12.02 p.m.)—I was about to check on the ages of both the honourable member for Bendigo (Mr Reid) and the honourable member for Fraser (Mr Langmore) to see whether they are baby boomers. I am sure that the baby boomers, with the power they have, will still be in the Parliament at the turn of the century.

It is great to join this debate. I compliment the honourable member for Fraser on introducing this very important subject. The honourable member for Fraser mentioned his visit to the museum. He probably encountered the same enthusiasm I did from those who have led the museum against pretty difficult odds over the last few years. I know that Dr Don McMichael, for instance, took great pleasure in showing us the paddle-steamer from the Murray River that the museum had purchased. Through its large and growing collection, the museum has made a great attempt to create a picture of the whole of Australia.

Recently, the honourable member for Burke (Mr O'Keefe) and I visited Canada as guests of Canada Post. We were able to visit a museum of civilisation at Hull in Quebec. It was extremely interesting to visit a living museum. The museum had people dressed up; there were even two-storey homes within the museum. It told the story of the Canadian blacks who migrated from slavery in the United States and it portrayed the history of Canada in a very real and living way.

We need to do the same in Australia. Canberra is a great potential site for such a museum. Not only is there a large and growing collection of items in Canberra but there is also an increasing number of tourists visiting the area. The three million tourists who have come into this Parliament cannot be wrong. These people have visited the Parliament and the War Memorial. We have done as well in clientele as have some of the major attractions in places such as Melbourne and Sydney.

Quite often honourable members who come into this institution get the picture only of this institution; they do not get the picture of Canberra as a whole. We are certainly moving away from the time when people considered Canberra to be a spoilt city. It has self-government. That government has to struggle; it has to make ends meet and to balance budgets. People who look at the whole of Canberra appreciate the fact that tourists are coming from all over Australia and the world to see Canberra, the national capital. It is an ideal site for a national museum.

I believe that old Parliament House should be considered as part of that museum. It would make an excellent constitutional museum. I think it was John-Michael Howson who suggested a few years ago a variety of programs that could be initiated in the old Parliament House to make it part of a living national museum. He suggested a humour section with people such as Jim Killen and Fred Daly on video, telling people about some of the humour in Australia's history. There could be a constitutional section telling some of the great stories of the beginnings of the Constitution and of the changes that have been made to the Constitution and their importance. It could show some of the major events that have now been documented in histories about the Parliament. It could mention the work of some of the former Clerks of this Parliament and the very important documentation they have done. It would be an extremely interesting museum.

The debate about where to have the seat of government was quite a humorous debate. Should it be in the Bombala-Delegate-Dalgety area extending down to Eden? Should it be in
this area? A couple of other areas were suggested as well. It was quite a lengthy debate, with people praising Bombala and saying how the men were strong and virile and the women were beautiful. I think it was Billy Hughes who interjected that it was also a place where one could get lumbago quite quickly.

It was decided that this region was where the national capital should be, and there has been some great documentation done about that. The region would have something to contribute as well. A national museum would show the history of Canberra and the region, perhaps mentioning William Westwood, the gentleman bushranger. He was called a gentleman bushranger because on one occasion he happened to hold up a coach that had the Governor's spouse in it. When he found it was her, he said, 'If you will dance a jig with me, I will let you go'. She did that and he let her go.

Part of a Japanese submarine that was taken from the sea just off the south-east coast has been given for posterity to the museum. Following what the honourable member for Bendigo said, I point out that a former member for Eden-Monaro was a man named Perkins. He followed the first member, Sir Austin Chapman. Mr Perkins was a great collector, and if one looks at the history of the region one often sees the Perkins papers referred to. He kept every newspaper and local record he ever had. He had a tremendous number of records, which people have been able to access. Things have improved now and we do not have to keep them; we can hand them over for archival collection and for recording.

All these things give us great reason for supporting the motion moved by the honourable member for Fraser. We need to keep in focus the commitment made by the former Prime Minister, Mr Bob Hawke, that we would have a national museum by 2001. I hope I am around to enjoy those celebrations. God willing, I intend to be if at all possible. Honourable members will recall that in May 1982 the then Minister for Home Affairs and Environment, the Hon. Barry Cohen, addressed this House on a report entitled The Plan for the Development of the Museum for Australia, which was prepared by the interim council of the Museum of Australia under the chairmanship of Mr Alex Dix. The report pursued the original concept of a national historical museum first advanced in the report on museums in Australia by the Piggot committee of inquiry, which was established by the Whitlam Government in 1973.

Mr Cohen was very supportive of the whole proposal. Although he could not commit the Government of the time, at that time these proposals looked like being realised in the not too distant future. That was 10 years ago now, and all we have done is talk about the proposal. If something is not done soon, my belief is that the proposals themselves will qualify for exhibits, because of the time that has elapsed and because of what will be their own historical significance.
The importance of establishing a national museum, as proposed, cannot be understated. We must reserve for our future generations as much as possible of those things that collectively make up our past. Too often we have heard sad stories related to us with regard to valuable pieces of our heritage, of great historical significance, that have been lost for ever. They have been lost because of carelessness on the part of the community and on the part of governments, and a failure to make sure these things are preserved.

We cannot allow the delay in the establishment of this museum to go on any longer. We need to have some very clear proposals. I know that there are lots of arguments put up with regard to the fact that we are in a recession at the moment, but when the time comes to look back on the delays we will still be without excuse because of the inestimable value—the irreplaceable value—of a lot of the things that exist in this land that need to be collected and that need to be professionally preserved and put on display for the Australian people to see. The proposal for the National Museum is ideally suited to that task. The proposed museum will reflect the development of the Australian nation in all its cultural diversity, including a special focus for the cultural aspirations of the Aboriginal people. Unfortunately, there have not been adequate funds to realise this goal to date. As I said earlier, the only thing that progresses is the debate.

As has already been said a number of times, the site selected for the museum at Yarramundi is a magnificent site. It was chosen from 12 sites which were put to the council at the time by the National Capital Development Commission. Clearly, the sites at Yarramundi Reach on the banks of Lake Burley Griffin were the sites of first choice, and obviously the best ones. I would like to commend again Senator Reid, the Minister for the Arts, Sport, the Environment and Territories (Mrs Kelly) and the honourable member for Fraser for their efforts to have this proposal fast-tracked. Also to be commended are the Friends of the Museum, who are very active indeed in promoting its development.

On a number of visits to the United States I have had the great privilege of visiting the Smithsonian museums in Washington DC, which happens to be the national capital of the USA. If people never have the experience of visiting the Smithsonian Institution and the various museums that make it up then they will have missed out. If they do not make the effort to see it they will have missed out on something that is an experience to remember for their lifetime. The Museum of American Heritage takes two or three days to really take in. In every exhibit one can see the well-preserved history of the United States, which is a country not much older than ours. It does not matter what country in the world people come from, they can visit that museum and at every step cannot help but be thrilled and interested in what they see and experience.

We, too, could have a museum of such national significance and value if we could only commit ourselves to the task. That is what this motion from the honourable member for Fraser is all about. It is designed to rally the support of honourable members of this House, of honourable senators and of the Australian community generally. The debate on this motion is being broadcast around the nation. I hope those people who are listening will join in the call from the honourable member for Fraser to put more pressure on government and on the organisations concerned with the establishment of the museum generally to make sure that it gets to the point where we see it fast-tracked. It is not the kind of thing that is an option for us; it is imperative that we engage in a major effort to move this project along. Concepts such as this must be brought to reality, and it is up to us and to all those listening to make sure that this does happen.

Criticism has been made of the lack of British heritage on the drawing board of the museum. This part of our heritage, which includes the history of our Constitution and all sorts of other things, would be included, certainly in the extension of the museum, the museum of political history, which is supposedly to be established in the old Parliament House. I hope it gathers momentum and that the long delay of ten years or so in
the establishment in a meaningful way of the national museum will not be repeated in establishing the old Parliament House as a museum of parliamentary and political memorabilia.

In Canberra we already have a number of excellent museums, including the world's best war memorial; we have Questacon; we have an outstanding art gallery; and we have a national film library which is preserving the historical films of Australia. Many good arguments have been put forward by speakers today in support of the establishment of this museum. We must do everything we can to prevent any part of our heritage being lost. I therefore have no hesitation in supporting this motion, and I call upon the Government to examine ways in which the establishment of the national museum could be achieved by the centenary of Federation in the year 2001.

(Time expired)

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Les Scott)—The debate is adjourned and the resumption of the debate will be made an order of the day for the next sitting Thursday.

BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA

Dr THEOPHANOUS (Calwell) (12.19 p.m.)—It is with some sadness that I come to this House to move this motion in relation to Bosnia-Herzegovina. Of course, I welcome the first paragraph of the motion, which was originally put down on 30 April in relation to the recognition of the independence of Bosnia-Herzegovina. I am pleased that the Government moved to recognise Bosnia-Herzegovina shortly after that. I move:

That this House calls on the Australian Government to:

(1) commence formal recognition of the independence of Bosnia-Herzegovina;
(2) assist in the relocation of refugees from wartorn Bosnia-Herzegovina; and
(3) support a peaceful resolution to the crisis in Bosnia-Herzegovina, especially through the UN.

Mr McArthur—I second the motion.

Dr THEOPHANOUS—We have achieved the formal recognition of Bosnia-Herzegovina, but unfortunately we also have the massive crisis which has erupted in that region. I must say that I am totally traumatised by the events which have occurred there. I have just returned from a visit to the refugee camps that have been created as a result of the policies that have been pursued to force the Muslim population in particular out of Bosnia-Herzegovina. The result of that has been that more than 700,000 people have been forced out of Bosnia-Herzegovina and most of them are in camps in Croatia, Slovenia and Hungary.

I visited the Bosnian refugee camps in those three countries. The events which have occurred and the tales that were told to me about what actually has happened in Bosnia-Herzegovina are amazing for this part of the twentieth century. It is very difficult to accept that these sorts of activities, these crimes against humanity, are being carried out in this part of the twentieth century in this modern civilisation. It is especially difficult to accept that these events are occurring in Europe.

I want to outline to the Australian community the terror of the situation. There is no doubt that the terrible campaign of so-called ethnic cleansing has been carried out in the most brutal fashion. Essentially, what is happening is that village after village of people who are not of Chetnik or Serbian background—that is, people of Muslim and Croatian background—in Bosnia-Herzegovina has been attacked and 'cleansed'.

The process which is used is that those people who have been involved in any kind of political activity or who have been involved in any kind of struggle against the Chetnik-Serbian forces have been taken off to the concentration camps which we have seen on television. I will talk about those camps in a moment. The other people have been forced out of their homes with hardly any possessions and, in fact, in most cases, no possessions. Many of them have been put in cattle trucks or cattle trains and taken to the border of Serbia or close to the border of Croatia and have been forced out of the country of Bosnia-Herzegovina at the point of a gun.

I spoke to many of those people and the stories that they had to tell of the events which they had witnessed were amazing. About 50 per cent of them had actually had
somebody killed in their presence. Very often it was women and children. Many of the women had been raped before they were sent off. Many parents were separated from their children and, in general, irrespective of whether one accepts that there is a legitimate conflict there or not, the behaviour in terms of crimes against humanity is extraordinary and totally unjustified.

Every person forced out of Bosnia-Herzegovina in this ethnic cleansing campaign was required to sign a document, of which I have a copy. I seek leave to table it for the House to note.

Leave granted.

Dr THEOPHANOUS—I thank the House. Although this document is in Serbo-Croatian, honourable members can see clearly that it requires people to sign over all rights to their house, their property, everything. They simply say, 'I have voluntarily signed over all this and I am leaving voluntarily from my village'. That is what is happening with the campaign of ethnic cleansing. The result of that campaign is the great tragedy we are seeing at the moment.

The situation that confronts the people taken into the concentration camps—not the 700,000 people I referred to who were thrown out of Bosnia-Herzegovina—we have seen on television because of the activities of some heroic journalists who have managed to get into one of those camps and to show the actual conditions. The horror stories that are being reported are true. Some of the women I spoke to in the camps said their husbands had been put in these concentration camps and some had managed to escape. They reported the torture, the brutality and the excesses that were carried out against these people.

We have now had reports from Amnesty International and the Red Cross that clearly show that these crimes against humanity have been carried out and are unfortunately continuing. In the face of this, the international community must act to protect the reborn state of Bosnia-Herzegovina. It must act at least to guarantee humanitarian assistance to those people, because without that assistance many of them face starvation and disease.

In addition, those people who have not yet been taken or pushed out are surrounded. For example, the capital city of Sarajevo is surrounded. It is not possible to get in and out except through parts of the airport, and that became possible only in the last few weeks through a massive effort by the United Nations. Prior to that, Sarajevo was bombed and shot at by cannons on a daily basis. There is indiscriminate shelling by the big cannons that have been brought there to surround the city of Sarajevo and the shelling has been continuing day after day.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I will continue to speak on this matter in other forums and in other speeches before this Parliament. I ask honourable members to support this motion asking the Australian Government to assist in the relocation of refugees from war-torn Bosnia-Herzegovina and to support a peaceful resolution to the crisis in Bosnia-Herzegovina, especially through the United Nations. The United Nations must act to protect the humanitarian convoys to ensure that the people at least have basic provisions, and there must be action to achieve a political solution to the crisis as soon as possible.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Les Scott)—Order! It being 12.30 p.m., the debate is interrupted in accordance with sessional order 104A. The debate is adjourned and the resumption of the debate will be made an order of the day for the next sitting Thursday.

GRIEVANCE DEBATE

Question proposed:
That grievances be noted.

Marriage Education

Mr ANDREWS (Menzies) (12.30 p.m.)—On July 24 of this year, the Minister for Justice (Senator Tate) announced a Federal funding increase for family services. According to the Minister's press statement:

Included in the increased allocation is $800,000 extra for marriage education initiatives and close to $1.5 million extra for marriage counselling nationwide.

Later the Minister noted that the increase in marriage education 'more than doubles last year's commitment so that our full annual outlay in 1992-93 will now be $1.2 million'.
Leaving aside the fact that the Department’s funding figures reveal a total of only $624,000 in new grants, and not the $800,000 mentioned by the Minister, the allocation raises a number of important issues. These issues have to be put in the context of Government funding for programs aimed at preventing the high breakdown of marriage and the consequent social and economic costs.

Even with an increase in Federal funding, the Government provides less than $10 per marriage for education, yet the cost of marriage breakdown in Australia has been conservatively estimated at more than $3,000m or over $12,000 per separation. It is in the context of this minuscule allocation to marriage education that questions about the policy of allocation to agencies arise. Let me remind the House that the funding for marriage education is made to agencies that have been approved by the Attorney-General pursuant to either the Marriage Act or the Family Law Act, a scheme first introduced under the Matrimonial Causes Act by a Liberal government in 1959.

Accordingly, it is appropriate to examine the allocation that the Minister has announced. When we examine the new policy funding, a number of questions arise. First, why, for example, has 38 per cent of the new policy funding been directed to New South Wales and 24 per cent to Queensland yet only 6 per cent to agencies in Victoria? Last financial year a similarly high proportion of funds was also provided to New South Wales agencies. In fact, agencies and agency directors that I have spoken to over the past two weeks have universally described this year’s funding allocation as ‘political’. Indeed, I was told of one agency which received no new funding but, upon protest by a senior churchman to which that agency is responsible, an allocation has apparently now been made. Last year I complained of similar examples of political allocations to which no adequate response has ever been received.

Second, why is there also new policy funding to marriage guidance councils for marriage education when there is no record of them having provided marriage education to date, despite some receiving grants for this purpose in past years? This is not to decry the work of marriage guidance councils in the various States—they perform an important task—but it is again to question the basis upon which funding for marriage education is provided nationally.

Third, why does it appear that there is no correlation between the number of participants attending programs conducted by an agency and the grants made to agencies by the Government? Last year I asked a series of questions on notice of the Attorney-General (Mr Duffy) about the number of couples attending programs, to which I received the following response:

In 1990-91, 9434 couples attended marriage education programs conducted by organisations who receive funding for these programs under the Marriage Act 1961 and/or the Family Law Act 1975.

Statistics on couples attending marriage education programs in 1989-90 were provided to my Department in the annual reports of individual organisations. However, there was no uniform method of recording this data during the 1989-90 financial year or in previous years. Therefore, I am unable to refer to this source to present a total and accurate account of these services for that year.

My Department recently introduced a statistical return form which collects information of this type from approved family services organisations. The collected information will be available in the Annual Report of my Department for 1991-92.

Leaving aside the fact that the Attorney was able to inform me of the total number of couples but not how that figure was comprised, the answer suggests that funding was provided to agencies without any correlation to the service which they provided. Indeed, a breakdown of the funding figures and the independent figures which I have been able to obtain indicates that there is no correlation between funding and the service provided. For example, if we look at the figures for New South Wales, we see that funding is in the order of 36 to 37 per cent, yet New South Wales agencies appear to deal with less than 30 per cent of the couples around Australia.

In contrast, the funding to Victoria is in the order of 12.9 to 13 per cent, yet Victorian agencies appear to deal with more than 20 per cent of the total of the couples that are seen
throughout Australia. If it were simply based on population, one would expect to see something like 25 per cent of the funding going to Victoria. This is not an argument that one State ought to get more than another, it is simply an argument that there ought to be a proper, logical and rational basis upon which these allocations are made.

If the Attorney wishes to dispute this assertion, let him provide details of the following: how many couples did each of the agencies which applied for grants pursuant to the Marriage Act and/or the Family Law Act deal with in 1991-92, given that in his answer to me he says that this information has now been recorded? If the Minister needs some assistance to answer this question, may I refer him to question 7 on the application form to agencies, which states that a description of an existing service should include as attachment A a list of information which should be provided including, inter alia, the number of clients currently reached by the service and demographic profile of current clientele. Fourthly, in his media release Senator Tate says:

Marriage Guidance Australia will produce a short, accessible video as part of a national program aimed at helping to educate people on marriage, conflict resolution and family skills.

I also note that the Australian Association for Marriage Education will be funded to raise awareness of marriage education, yet the fact remains that agencies currently presenting programs are either inadequately funded or not funded at all. The Australian Association for Marriage Education, in figures it put together, suggested that simply to adequately fund the current programs conducted in 1991-92 by agencies would cost in the order of $2m, far in excess of the $1.2m, even with the increase announced by the Government on 24 July.

The reality is that, despite the Minister’s self-congratulatory rhetoric, this Government spends less than $10 per marriage on marriage preparation when separation and divorce cost the nation in the order of $3,000m a year.

Finally, why are there no acceptable guidelines in place for funding of programs so that agencies can be assured that their genuine requests will receive more attention than the political lottery which apparently now exists? There are many other issues which I could raise about the allocation of funds but time does not permit. Having worked in marriage education programs for over a decade, albeit on a part time basis, and having been on the national executives of the peak bodies in the field, I have seen the real value of these programs and the frustration of the agencies with the absence of clear, logical and justly applied government policies.

My grievance is for the thousands of young couples whose relationships, marriages and family lives could have been assisted by a government policy which devotes more than one three-thousandth of the cost of marriage breakdown to its prevention through education and preparation.

European Refugees

Dr THEOPHANOUS (Calwell) (12.40 p.m.)—I want to talk about the situation facing Croatia, Slovenia and Hungary as a result of the crisis in Bosnia-Herzegovina and the refugee situation in that part of the world as a consequence of this crisis. Close to half a million refugees have now come out of Bosnia-Herzegovina into Croatia. These refugees came very suddenly over the last few months because of the campaign of ethnic cleansing that has been put forward by the Chetnik-Serbian elements that are trying to seize control of Bosnia-Herzegovina. As a result of that campaign, and the many atrocities committed in the campaign, nearly half a million people have been forced into Croatia alone. There are another 80,000 in Slovenia and close to 50,000 in Hungary.

I visited refugee camps containing the Bosnian people in those three countries and also had discussions with a large number of people involved in caring for the refugees. Those three nations are in difficult economic circumstances and it is a huge burden for them to try to cope with this large number of refugees. This is especially the case with respect to Croatia, which has been emerging from a war-type situation and has then had its economy significantly devastated. It started rebuilding its economy following the international recognition of Croatia and now finds
itself with the heavy blow of having to look after close to half a million additional people who have come as refugees from across the border in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

These people have been put in hotels and whatever other accommodation was available. Although conditions are livable, they are of course very cramped, and it is clear that Croatia does not have the resources to sustain half a million refugees for an indefinite period. It is necessary to give assistance to all three countries—Croatia, Slovenia and Hungary—to cope with the massive refugee problem arising from the devastation in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees called a special conference two weeks ago in Geneva. Sixty-one countries, including Australia, attended to deal with the crisis and talk about what is going to happen. At that meeting a number of decisions were taken. The most important decision was that countries should immediately increase their allocation of financial assistance, food assistance and clothing assistance to the three key countries that are taking the refugees. In addition, however, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has asked that, where resettlement is possible, Bosnians who have relatives in other countries in Europe or in countries such as the United States, Australia and Canada should have the opportunity to be reunited with those relatives.

In the light of this determination and in the light of a direct request to me while I was in Zagreb by the Director of the Red Cross of Bosnia-Herzegovina—and I have the letter—I am appealing to the Government to see whether further additional assistance can be sent to Bosnia for the refugees from Bosnia-Herzegovina. In addition, I appeal to the Australian community to help through the various forums, so that we can get aid to people in the camps in Croatia, Hungary and Slovenia. Naturally, this should not override the aid we are giving or trying to get in to those people who are trapped within Bosnia-Herzegovina itself, which I have spoken about on an earlier occasion.

What is most important is that we recognise the dimensions of this crisis in humanitarian terms and respond accordingly. In the letter to the Prime Minister (Mr Keating) I have also suggested that Australia might consider some reorganisation of its refugee program and special assistance category program so as to take some of the Bosnians who have relatives in Australia.

There is also the question of the large number of children who have lost or seen murdered both their parents. We should investigate whether we can assist with that particular problem. Let me say that obviously what is necessary is a just political solution to this crisis to enable the killing to stop, to enable the concentration camps to be emptied and to enable the people to return to their homes.

There will be a meeting very shortly in London at which the various sides are supposed to appear to have discussions. It is imperative for the future of that region that this meeting succeed in getting a breakthrough. It is essential that there be goodwill and that there be an agreement as to how to control the extremists who have carried out these dreadful actions against humanity. If this conference fails then I am very frightened for the future of that part of Europe. A conflagration in that area could blow up to engulf the whole region.

In December last year I came back from a visit to the region. I visited Sarajevo and had meetings with Mr Alija Izetbegovic, the President of Bosnia-Herzegovina and members of his Cabinet. I met also with representatives of the Croatian side and the Serbian side. I warned at that meeting, when I saw the contradictory positions that had been put and the differences in the positions that had been put, that there was a need for international actions to negotiate a solution.

I issued that statement in Zagreb and here in Australia. Other people who could see what was happening and what was likely to happen also issued statements and asked that the international community use diplomacy to prevent the crisis. This was not done. Instead, we have had the killing of a conservatively estimated 30,000 people, and the figure is probably closer to 50,000 people. We have had all the atrocities that I have referred to.
We have had a huge movement of people. More than one million people have been shifted within Bosnia-Herzegovina itself in addition to the 700,000 who have been pushed out of the nation.

This catastrophe could have been avoided had there been action on the part of the international community. The international community must not fail to achieve a result in London and at the United Nations. We must make sure that the other crises which are building up in that region are resolved in a peaceful manner without the violence which has occurred up to this particular time.

Tasmania

Olympic Games Competitors

Racial Discrimination

Mr GOODLUCK (Franklin) (12.50 p.m.)—I agree with the sentiments of my friend from the Government the honourable member for Calwell (Dr Theophanous). We read about and see the problems in Bosnia, and it saddens me to think that the world is as it is at the moment. We have got two-thirds of the world living in absolute poverty, and the rest of the world starting to fight each other.

We have even got fighting in politics, have we not? Even in Australia at the moment there is bitter, bitter fighting, when we have so many problems at hand to overcome. I grieve today on several counts, although probably I am going to smile on a couple of counts, because it is good that we get away from some of the bitterness that occurs, onto a few lighter things.

Firstly, as most of my colleagues know, I come from the State of Tasmania, and am very proud of it. I read in the Australian today a letter which made me smile a bit. The heading is 'Sell Tasmania to the Japanese.' The letter reads:

Australia's foreign debt is wearing out our worry beads. What can be done to cancel this net $150 billion?

Selling Tasmania is a solution. To the Japanese quite possibly, for golf courses. That's a ready $150 billion.

Should the feelings of the Tasmanian outlanders be intolerably hurt by this, the alternative solution to our national insolvency is the invasion of New Zealand.

I will give the writer a mention: his name is Frank Hainsworth. He is not in my electorate. He comes from Burleigh Waters in Queensland. He does not vote for me and probably never will vote for me. I am not upset by that letter; I smile.

I return to my subject of the Olympic Games. I live in a suburb of Hobart called Lindisfarne: a nice suburb, a very peaceful place. Strangely enough, we had an Olympic gold medallist from Lindisfarne, by the name of Stephen Hawkins. A lot of politicians grandstand, do they not? They are like that.

Mr Snowdon—Not you.

Mr GOODLUCK—Not me. I am glad my friend over there said, 'Not me'. We like to paint ourselves as people who know somebody else who is important. Stephen is the son of very good friends of mine, Stephen and Judy Hawkins from Lindisfarne. They are proud, I am proud, and I know that all Tasmanians are proud. All the people of Lindisfarne are proud. I have known the family for a long time. I will not say how long. My grandson is up in the audience today, and he is the only one I will mention. I have got some members of my family up there, and I would just like to mention him. He is three years of age, and his name is Isaac. I hope it is a better world that Isaac grows up into. I hope it is a more peaceful place and a happier place. I hope that he can get a job, too.

Mr Reid—A good one-liner.

Mr GOODLUCK—There are no votes from Isaac yet, but he will vote for me.

Honourable members interjecting—

Mr GOODLUCK—Honourable members are laughing and saying I probably will not be around then. But my spirit will be. I congratulate Lindisfarne's gold medallist, Stephen Hawkins. I congratulate him, and all Tasmanians do. His mum and dad are extremely proud, as are his brother and sister and his grandmother, Mrs Nita Hawkins. The late Steve Hawkins senior would be proud too, if he were alive and saw that his
grandson was a gold medallist in rowing at the Olympic Games. I lived next door to Stephen Hawkins's uncle Gerwin and auntie Elaine Hawkins, and they were the best neighbours that God ever put on this earth.

There was another boy from Lindisfarne, Simon Hollingsworth, who ran in the 400 metres. He did a very good job. He is a young fellow, and he has a big future. But isn’t that letter about selling Tasmania lovely?

Mr Snowdon—They would probably sell you.

Mr GOODLUCK—The honourable member would probably sell me: I would make a lot of money, too, probably. It is great to think that Stephen Hawkins and Simon Hollingsworth came from Tasmania. That makes all Tasmanians proud. We have economic problems down there, but we will overcome them, I am sure, with hard work and dedication.

Another thing I read which amused me was that the Attorney-General (Mr Duffy)—a good fellow, the Attorney-General—calls racial vilification a crime. I laughed about that. We are going to introduce a Bill so that we cannot tell any racist jokes. I say to my daughter Charlotte, who is in the gallery, that we cannot tell any more racist jokes. She tells a lot of racist jokes. I laughed when I read that. I thought to myself, 'Boy, I have been the subject of racial jokes all my life, as a Tasmanian'. Even on the road safety committee, one of those very dedicated public servants said, 'Mr Goodluck, you would be a good driver: you would be able to see around corners with your two heads'.

All my life, Tasmanians have been the subject of racial jokes, about having six fingers or six toes. When I was playing football, someone said, 'You'd be able to kick with both feet, beautifully'. I asked, 'What do you mean?'. He said, 'You've got six toes on each foot'. We are talking about that sort of thing. Where do we start with 'racial vilification'? Where do we finish?

We have so many of these people in Australia today. They are well educated; they love to have their ideas pushed to the fore; they love to paint new ideas. They are getting away from the real fundamentals that we all should be working for—solidarity in our family, solidarity in our life, solidarity in our work ethics, et cetera. But we have all these trendy little groups—everywhere I go, I come across them. I will not start on the greenies in Tasmania today; I will give them rest.

Mr Lavarch—Give the greenies a burn, Bruce.

Mr GOODLUCK—That would be right. We have all these little minority groups. I do not smoke, yet I find it really offensive to think that people cannot smoke in airports today. I start to wonder what it is all about. The non-smokers are entitled to their—

Mr Snow—They can go outside.

Mr GOODLUCK—No, they cannot go outside. Why can people not smoke in airports after travelling for 12 and 15 hours on planes? Remember, I do not smoke. But I do not like minority groups dictating the terms to me or to other people that I support.

I watch the greenies telling the people of Tasmania, 'You should be doing this; you should be doing that'. The media are taking heed of it, and I think they are winning. And people like me, who should stand up for the majority—and I do stand up for the majority—seem to be forgotten. But that is just another point that I would like to raise.

I come back to the Prime Minister (Mr Keating)—the famous Prime Minister of those opposite. I gave him a good welcome when he came to Hobart. I said, 'Welcome, Prime Minister, to Hobart'. What did I hear on the ABC on the Judy Tierney program? Actually, I got in before him. I rang up and said, 'Really, you are coming down here talking about a grant'.

A football club down there approached him. The President of the football club, too, had a bit of a shot at me. I will have a shot at him now: Mr Woodruffe can stick to his business, and I will stick to my politics. He says that he wants $4m for a football club in Tasmania, when I have got sick people everywhere, when I have got elderly people who are not being well cared for.

I will come back to my point. The only point that I want to make is to ask the Prime
Minister to get our priorities right. He should not come to Tasmania; he was probably conned into it by this fellow—I am not blaming the Prime Minister completely. We are talking about $4m of assistance to a football club—when we have got other problems at hand, such as high unemployment and elderly people who cannot be looked after in their nursing homes—problems everywhere.

I have played a lot of sport and I love sport. Mr Woodruffe is saying to me, 'Bruce, come on, come off it. Are you trying to put our football club down?'. I am not saying that at all. I am saying, 'Let us get our priorities right'. I will support every sporting activity in Australia but let us get our priorities right, first of all. Let us help, as I repeat, the sick, the elderly, the underprivileged, the other people in our community that need help and assistance, and then we can start talking about grants to football clubs.

I am afraid that a lot of grandstanding occurs—and I have probably participated in that over the years. A lot of pork-barrelling occurs with politicians who want to stay in this life, but sometimes to the detriment of the good things that are needed in Australia. I thank the gentlemen opposite; they can wake up now.

Fisher Electorate

Mr LAVARCH (Fisher) (1.00 p.m.)—It is always a great honour to follow the honourable member for Franklin (Mr Goodluck). I have heard some excellent speeches from him over the times. I must admit that the one today was not quite as good as the petrol prices speech which he used to give in every grievance debate a few years ago, but that one was not too bad.

In fact, it has been for five years that I have had the great privilege to listen to the honourable member for Franklin, and during the Parliamentary recess, I think, the class of 1987 marked its fifth year as honourable members of this House. For me, it was an appropriate occasion on which to pause and take stock of the challenges, achievements and failures of the past five years.

Today I wish to canvass the most important issues facing my electorate, particularly the shires of Pine Rivers and Caboolture, which between them form the overwhelming population base of the seat. The two shires form the northern corridor between Brisbane and the Sunshine Coast. The region, like its geographic equivalent between Brisbane and the Gold Coast, comprises one of the fastest growing areas in Australia. The enormous population boom commenced in Pine Rivers in the early 1970s with the development of the suburb of Strathpine, and it has continued northwards more or less unabated along the principal transport corridors of the Bruce Highway and the north coast rail line.

Along with many others, my parents built their first home in Pine Rivers in 1974, and I have lived in the area since I was 13. Like Caboolture, the shire is predominantly made up of young families and first home buyers. The region's rapid growth over the last 20 years has been largely unplanned. In saying this, I do not mean to criticise town planning decisions or either local authority. Rather, I point to the fact that the entire south-east corner of Queensland has never had a master plan which identifies in a truly coordinated manner where infrastructure is needed to match the great population growth. This lack of a coordinated response to growth, which extends far beyond the jurisdiction of any one local council or any one government department, has been a concern I have voiced since the early 1980s, when I was a councillor on the Pine Rivers Shire Council.

The major consequence of poor urban planning is that future demand for government services is never properly anticipated. Consequently, my principal task over the last five years has been playing the game of catch-up, trying to get government services to meet already proven local demands. In 1987, despite the fact that Pine Rivers and Caboolture were major population centres experiencing rapid growth, the range of Federal services to the region was extremely limited. Both shires were serviced by CES offices, for example, but there was no Social Security office, despite the fact that the electorate was, in population terms, the
second largest in Australia. Child-care and aged care services were obviously present, but they were patently inadequate. The basic road network was good, but serious traffic and safety issues were emerging.

I am pleased to report that there have been some major improvements in service provision over these last five years. In 1988 the Caboolture Shire finally received a Social Security office, and a youth access centre was added to the services provided by the CES in 1989. Unemployment is clearly the most important issue confronting Australia and, as in the rest of the country, jobless numbers have risen in Caboolture and Pine Rivers. Given the importance of the local home building industry, however, the recession has followed a somewhat different pattern from that in most of Australia. When home loan interest rates were at their peak in 1989 and 1990, local home building slowed appreciably and unemployment rose. The jobless peak was reached in June 1991 and is now about 2 per cent below that figure. The latest figures place unemployment in Pine Rivers at 5.9 per cent and Caboolture at 12 per cent.

The employment situation in Caboolture is of grave concern, but it is being addressed. The Commonwealth has funded the construction of a TAFE campus to service the shire, at a capital cost of over $14m. The college will greatly enhance the range of training opportunities available to shire residents. Recent increased funding to Skillshare and other labour market programs have also helped, and the shire council will receive more than $2m under the local government capital works program announced in Tuesday's Budget.

In Pine Rivers, increased service provision is also enhancing the quality of life for local residents. It was because of the experience of regions such as Pine Rivers that the Government last year unveiled the Better Cities program. That is an ambitious plan to encourage better urban planning and management by all levels of government. A year down the track, the program's principles are being applied to Pine Rivers. New housing estates are springing up under the banner of 'green streets', which has now joined the common lexicon of local real estate agents.

In recent improvements in other community service provisions, I can report that a regional Social Security office is to open in Pine Rivers early next year. That means that finally the electorate will be adequately serviced. Two federally subsidised retirement villages have been built for the region's frail aged at Lawnton and Kallangur, and a nursing home has been approved for Ferny Hills. Marriage Guidance Queensland has received Federal funding to open a regional office in Strathpine. Since 1987, two child-care centres have opened, extra child-care places have been provided in family day care schemes, and new private centres have applications before the council to take advantage of the extension of fee relief to the private sector.

Numerous HACC program grants have been distributed to enable the frail elderly and the disabled to continue to live with dignity in their own community. Recipients included the frail aged centre at Petrie and the visiting services to Dayboro and Samford. Crisis accommodation and supported accommodation programs have provided community and cooperative housing for the homeless and for teenagers at risk. The black spots road safety program has enabled the elimination of several notorious traffic accident sites and bottlenecks, most notably the Leitchs Road and South Pine Road intersection and the Boundary Road and Gympie Road intersection at Kallangur.

Recreation and sporting grants have allowed local clubs to provide much needed equipment and playing facilities for the region's growing youth population. This scheme has enabled a major sports centre to be built at Kallangur in conjunction with the Pine Rivers Council and work will shortly start on an extension to the Police Citizens Youth Club at Lawnton.

The impact of Federal employment programs can also be assessed. The Strathpine CES is coordinating a range of important employment and training programs which have been expanded in recent times. The highly successful Pine Rivers Skillshare has received recurrent and capital funding to
improve its services, and Federal funding has recently been approved for an innovative work placement service for those with a disability.

Pine Rivers Council is a sponsor under the Jobskills program introduced last year. Some 20 trainees are employed under this scheme, most of them working at the John Oxley Sports and Recreation Reserve while also completing their TAFE course. That is a good practical scheme which is providing good job experience as well as community benefit. I hope that the Council will expand its Jobskills program. I am also liaising with them about investigating prospects under the local environmental action program.

The continued provision of these local services is an earnest attempt to meet growing community demand and to correct the legacy of years of unplanned development. Many of the changes are incremental but, combined, they add up to a vastly improved network of service provision to the people of my electorate.

Notwithstanding these advances, much remains to be tackled. Public transport is inadequate throughout the Pine Rivers and Caboolture shires. Trials to extend the Brisbane City Council bus service are welcomed, and it is hoped that the State Government may extend the rail service to the suburbs of Kallangur and Murrumba Downs.

Child-care services are still stretched, although private centres are planned for Strathpine, Petrie and Burpengary. I will be canvassing the Department of Health, Housing and Community Services for further assistance to public schemes, as the lack of child-care places is a major impediment to the families in the two shires.

Whilst the region has a predominantly youthful population, there is a need for more nursing home beds. Proposals are being advanced by the RSL for a war veterans complex at Kallangur and by the Christadelphian Church—both are worthy of support from the Commonwealth Government.

Pine Rivers and Caboolture are centres which require government to provide basic infrastructure. It is for that reason that I very strenuously oppose the sort of Budget cuts which are being proposed by the Liberal and National parties. My area and the people that I represent who need the provision of these services will be the big losers if the billions upon billions of dollars are cut from government as proposed by the Liberal Party. These services cannot be provided by the private sector; market forces will never deliver them, and it is only through the intervention of government in recognising that such services are needed for people's quality of life that those services will actually be provided. They can only be provided by the Government taking an active role and that will not occur if we see the sort of Budget formula being proposed by the Opposition. On the whole, it has been a successful five years and I look forward to another five.

**Government Policy**

Mr REID (Bendigo) (1.10 p.m.)—I enter the debate today to grieve over the Government's failure to honour its promises to all Australians, and also its failure to honour its promises to the people of the electorate of Bendigo.

I want to give some examples. The first one is health. In 1983 the then Prime Minister, Mr Bob Hawke, promised that nine out of 10 Australians would pay less for the health needs of themselves and their families. That has been broken over and over. The increased Medicare levy will rip $300m from average Australians, and past increases in prescription charges also have an effect. Health is more expensive, there are longer waiting lists and there is less availability of health services, particularly in country areas.

The most infamous promise of all by the then Prime Minister was that by 1990 no Australian child would be living in poverty. You only have to look around our capital cities and our country areas to see that that promise has not been kept.

The present Prime Minister (Mr Keating) said in August 1988 that our foreign debt burden had already stabilised and had begun to fall. At that time net foreign debt was $103.4 billion—now it is well in excess of $148 billion. Not only is it a broken promise, but also a new definition of the terms 'stabilising' and 'falling' has come into our
vocabulary. What it represents, of course, is a debt to every man, woman and child in this nation of $10,000 per head, or $40,000 debt to every average family in this country. When every baby is born, it comes into this world with a $10,000 debt over its head.

In the short time that I have available to me during this debate I certainly would not be able to highlight all of Labor's broken promises, there are far too many of them. But the promises have built up community expectation that the economy will turn around and all will be rosy. In fact, members of the Labor Party used to run around my electorate prior to the 1990 elections saying that petrol prices would come down. Petrol prices have never been higher in this nation. Their own State Labor Government imposed a further tax on that with the Pyramid levy, inflicting more and more pain on Australia's motorists.

The promises continued, particularly in relation to employment. One of the real legacies of both the Hawke and Keating governments will be the levels of unemployment in this nation during their period in government. Unemployment is still around 11 per cent, there are few jobs available and taxes are continuing to rise for every person in the community. I have areas in my electorate where there are 29 per cent unemployment levels. Many areas are in excess of 16 per cent and the situation is not improving.

The Government has done nothing in this current Budget to inspire any confidence at all into the community, particularly into the business community. After all, its members are the ones that drive most of the economic growth in this country and they are the ones that create employment opportunities. Profit is not a dirty word, profit equals jobs, and if a business is not operating on an economical and profitable basis, it will be unable to employ people. If only small business could have costs reduced under the Fightback package, as we propose, there would be employment opportunities created immediately.

I am pleased that our shadow Minister for education, the honourable member for Goldstein (Dr Kemp), is sitting at the table at the moment, because the Government made many promises about improved school retention rates and gave young Australians the expectation of a tertiary institution place, yet thousands missed out at the start of this year. They could not get into tertiary education and they could not get into technical and further education. A lot of those opportunities were lost to them purely and simply by bad planning, by bad administration and by the bad policies of the Hawke-Keating governments.

The Keating Government spends $9.2 billion on education—that is the allocation in this Budget—yet it raises $9.44 billion through hidden wholesale sales tax. So it is spending $9.2 billion on education, yet at the same time it is raising from people $9.44 billion through the hidden wholesale sales tax. Where is the equity in that? Where is the social justice in hiding that tax from the people so that they do not know what they are paying? People are paying more than the Government is prepared to spend on educating our young people. It is an absolute disgrace.

I grieve for the farmers in my electorate who are suffering declining incomes; yet primary assistance in this Budget is down $97m on last financial year. There is no long term strategy in place by the Government to improve farm viability. The Government has not addressed the question of improving transport so that primary producers can get their transport costs down and get their product onto the waterfronts and to export markets. The Government has not improved the waterfront handling charges. It has not improved efficiency. New Zealand is leading us in all of those areas and, in fact, is taking many of our overseas markets.

I grieve for the people who put their faith in Medicare. The levy increase in the Budget will not raise the funds needed. In fact, whether the funds actually find their way into the health system will be another question because that money goes into Consolidated Revenue and it will be up to the Government to decide how that money is to be delivered to the public and private health systems. As for the funds needed for the public system and the private health system, even the
Minister is already foreshadowing that there could be an increased levy in the future to try to make up the shortfall. The health system in this country is renowned throughout the world because of the long waiting list for elective surgery.

I grieve for the pensioners who have really been misled by the Dawkins Budget announcement of a $3 per week increase. It is really only $1 a week more with the other $2 being the March indexation increase brought forward. The increased Medicare levy will wipe out most of the so-called pension rise for part pensioners.

On behalf of all Australians I appeal to the Prime Minister, I appeal to his better nature, if he has one, to come clean and be honest about the real state of Australia’s economy. What he should be doing is addressing the important questions which the Government has been promising now for something like 10 years. There has been an accumulation of commitments made to the Australian community. The Government has been saying, ‘Hang on, things will be better. We had to have the recession—it was the recession we had to have. It has caused you a lot of pain’. Yet in this Budget the Prime Minister is saying to the Australian community ‘Trust me, things will improve’.

Well, after nine Budgets and three economic statements, still the economy is not improving, still the unemployment queues are growing. The Government is not addressing these issues. It has made these promises. It has built up expectations in the community that it is a caring Government. It is not a caring government at all. It claims it has a commitment to social justice. There is no social justice in the policies of the Government. What in fact it is doing is looking after its political seats and its political future. The Government is not interested in the Australian community, it is not interested in the betterment of this country and the generation of new employment opportunities and improved economic efficiency.

I ask the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Employment, Education and Training (Mr Snowdon), who is at the table, to report to the Prime Minister the fact that Australians out there are still hurting. They do not believe the promises that the Government has made to them over the past 10 years because it has not fulfilled those promises. Nor is the Government likely to fulfil them because the Budget that the Government has structured and the policies that it has in place will not meet the aspirations of the Australian community. The policies will not meet the aspirations of our young people who want to work and want to develop—(Time expired)

**Economic Policy**

Mr LANGMORE (Fraser)(1.20 p.m.)—I cannot let this opportunity pass without a comment on the remarks of the honourable member for Bendigo (Mr Reid). Although this is not the moment for debating the Budget, his charge that the Government does not care about the people of Australia, or that this is not a caring Budget, is quite clearly without any justification at all. I am astonished that he would attempt to argue something so misleading in this House, and I regret having to make this comment because I have some respect for the honourable member for Bendigo.

I want to talk about the issue of economic policy in the broadest philosophical sense. While studying economics and social work at Melbourne University in 1960, I was placed as a part time social work trainee in the Brotherhood of St Laurence. My first client was a young man who came in with his wife and baby. He was unemployed, had to wait two more weeks for his unemployment benefit, had no savings and needed cash and food desperately. Fortunately the Brotherhood could help him. He was unemployed because of the credit squeeze that the Menzies Government had introduced to control inflation.

I gradually and reluctantly realised that this family’s suffering was the direct result of deliberate government policy. It seemed incredible that government Ministers and their advisers were responsible for policies which were undermining this man’s dignity as well as his income. This realisation led naturally to an intensified interest in economics. What had previously been a dry theoretical subject now had a human dimension. I learned also
that economics is value-laden and that every economist makes choices about the ranking of goals and priorities. Economists, of whom I am now one, unconsciously or consciously inject values into analysis and policy prescription.

All economics is political economy, in the nineteenth century sense. For example, most economists perceive a trade-off between inflation and unemployment. Although both are regarded as problems, many economists would argue that achieving and maintaining low inflation should have priority. 'Inflation first' is their slogan. Ian Macfarlane, the newly appointed Deputy Governor of the Reserve Bank, said recently that it was necessary to have a recession in order to reduce inflation. He said:

It is true that we paid a substantial price to reduce inflation, but we had to do it at some stage.

If that were true then surely the costs of the recession should have been equitably shared, rather than imposed on those least able to afford them. Macfarlane concludes, 'We have paid the costs... ', but I would argue that they were not paid equitably. They have been paid by the unemployed, and there has been no policy of increasing unemployment benefits to help them bear the cost.

A low inflation rate is certainly desirable for it increases Australia's international competitiveness and improves economic security. Yet moderate inflation and unemployment are hardly equivalent evils. Inflation is just about the value of money, while unemployment marginalises and stigmatises people, destroying their economic security and their self-respect.

Many economists, particularly monetarists, solemnly talked during the 1980s about 'the natural rate of unemployment'. William Vickrey, President of the American Economic Association, said recently that that was one of the most vicious euphemisms ever coined. Our own Treasury has used the inhuman term 'over-full employment', meaning that, while there was still unemployment, inflationary pressure was increasing. Such word games demonstrate the dehumanisation of such economics.

The way out of this conflict is to emphasise reduction of both unemployment and inflation. It is not beyond the wit of competent economists to design policies which simultaneously increase employment and reduce inflation. That is the main goal of the accord, which has contributed so much to achieving both goals. Yet the economic rationalists remain opposed to, or sceptical about, incomes policy, despite the clear evidence of its success until the benefits were overwhelmed by the policies recommended by economic rationalists. The historian of the Treasury, Greg Whitwell, has written:

The 1980s have seen the triumph of economic rationalism. Greater efficiency has become a sacred goal. Increased competition and the unlocking of market forces, we are told, are the key means to obtain it. Proponents of economic rationalism insist that the public sector is riddled with inefficiencies. The private sector, by contrast, is self-evidently superior.

The deification of efficiency and the devaluing of effectiveness, equity and accessibility have become the hallmarks of the economic rationalist ascendancy in the Public Service. The private sector is idealised and the public sector is caricatured. Cutting public outlays and tax have become, to the economic rationalists, ends in themselves. The results are obvious. There has been considerable improvement in measured public sector productivity. EPAC has shown that productivity of government business enterprises grew by between 3 per cent and 6 per cent a year in the second half of the 1980s, two or three times faster than in the private manufacturing sector. Measurement of Public Service productivity is difficult, if not impossible, but there is no doubt that efficiency has also improved there.

However, there have been considerable costs. Community services have been starved of funds, many students who want to go into universities and TAFE's have not been able to go there, environmental funding has not been adequate, and the national infrastructure has not been improved at the rate at which it should have been. Is this what we really want? Nobody, of course, wants to pay taxes. We would all like to have complete control of our income. However, all of us also want
national security and safe neighbourhoods, high standards of education and health services, efficient and safe roads and public transport, conservation of substantial representative portions of the natural environment, and opportunities for cultural enrichment. Yet the quality and extent of those services cannot be maintained if their funding is continually being reduced. Of course, there is scope for improving the efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery, but improving efficiency and changing priorities will not ensure that all community programs are sufficiently funded to meet justifiable demands if total outlays are continually being reduced.

Given these justifiable needs for community services, it is a higher priority to maintain taxation than to reduce it. This is not to argue for increased taxes, though some would say that even that would be warranted. Rather, what is being suggested is that the time has come to stop aiming for tax cuts as the principal goal of fiscal policy and to replace them with a broader view of the role of public services in constructive, equitable, fulfilling and enlivening community life. This requires both a clearer view of and stronger commitment to national goals and more pragmatism about the means for achieving them.

The goal of full employment, which the Treasurer (Mr Dawkins) re-emphasised in the Budget on Tuesday night, must be reasserted without neglecting inflation. Equity must be re-emphasised without forgetting efficiency. That is exactly what this Budget does. Environmental conservation must be sought at the same time as economic development. In other words, a better balance is required in the use of means as well as of ends. Better balance is required in the use of monetary and budgetary policy.

The dimension of the common good has been missing from most debate about public policy, not only in Australia but in most of the English-speaking world, during the last decade. It is essential that it be restored to a central position before our society breaks down. If the employed neglect the unemployed and impoverished, not only will society be divided but the rejected will find ways of retaliating, as they did in Los Angeles. In any case, how can any of us be satisfied with a society in which 11 per cent of those who want to work and are prepared actively to look for it cannot find a way of supporting themselves or of making any formal contribution to the community? For society to be sustainable there must be a general confidence that all members will be treated fairly.

The central theme of this speech is the importance of restoring balance: in the values which guide us, between individual freedom and the common good; in the goals for which government aims, between efficiency and equity, growth of employment and reduction of inflation, between tax levels and the quality of services; and in the means used to achieve those goals, private enterprise and government services, monetary and budgetary policy. Our society will be more secure and attractive if it is also more equitable and humane, as well as more productive and efficient. (Time expired)

Capital Works: Regional and Remote Areas

Mr BRUCE SCOTT (Maranoa) (1.30 p.m.)—I want to focus my attention on the announcement by the Treasurer of the local government capital works program in the Budget on Tuesday night. He announced that $350m is going to be allocated in the next six to nine months for local government capital works programs designed to alleviate some of the unemployment in certain regions of Australia. I want to focus my attention on how this program is going to impact, or fail to impact, on the regional, rural and remote areas of Australia, and how the whole program is fundamentally flawed. Not only does the program set out to address a problem that it is not going to solve, it has major impediments that are going to impact on some of our most productive sectors, because they are going to be denied funding.

The moneys are to be allocated through three categories. The first category is going to receive $230m, two-thirds of the funding. To become eligible for this funding a region first has to have a labour force in excess of 60,000 people. Immediately this limits those able to access funds. Many worthwhile and sus-
tainable projects within regional and rural Australia will certainly be denied funding as a result of the minimum labour force criterion. Grouping together a labour force of 60,000 people in rural and remote Australia would involve enormous distances and variations in community of interest. This condition denies the majority of funds to much of my electorate of Maranoa and much of regional and rural Australia, which is in a desperate situation economically, suffering from a drought that is unprecedented in my history and in Australia's history.

There is a second category that is meant to pick up the other less densely populated areas that do not have a 60,000 strong labour force. These funds are designed to go to those shires or regions where the unemployment level is still above the national average. I believe this criterion is also fundamentally flawed as the real rate of unemployment in many agricultural sectors is hidden as a result of the failure of the Government's scheme to extend unemployment benefits to farmers. The flaw here is that in many agricultural electorates and local authority areas the major work force are people on the land, and in these cases they actually own the land; they are family farmers.

Because of the difficulty people, particularly farmers, are having accessing the Government's Jobsearch allowance, they do not become a statistic within that statistical area. We have 120,000 farmers in Australia today, or probably slightly in excess of that, but since the scheme was introduced we have had 134 farmers accessing the Jobsearch allowance. So what happens in this second category is that we get a masking of the real unemployment level due to farmers being ineligible for Jobsearch.

As we talk in this House today, six farmers are going to be leaving the land as a result of drought and low commodity prices. While they are drifting to the cities, we have still got this desperate situation confronting many agricultural and farming areas of Australia. This second category really does not identify all those who are unemployed.

The whole program has identified how desperate this Government really is. Let me give an example of how the Government consulted with the local governments that are going to have to implement these programs. I received a fax this morning from one of the 35 local governments in my area. They were requested on 28 July to provide details of a format of possible job creation projects to a value of $1m. It had to provide those details by the following day, 29 July. I do not call that adequate consultation. I think it illustrates the desperate nature of this Government, its members in desperate times thinking about their own jobs and not the well-being of the nation as a whole. To send a fax to a local government asking how it can spend $1m and put together a program in one day illustrates that point.

There are many worthwhile programs in regional and rural Australia which, if they were not restricted to this sort of methodology, would have accessed funds. They are long term programs and they are going to benefit the nation as a whole for many years to come. Let me mention one or two in my electorate. One is the Carnarvon Developmental Road, which would provide an alternative all-weather road link between north Queensland and south Queensland. We all know that the Bruce Highway north of Brisbane, a national highway, gets cut in times of flood. The alternative inland route goes via Emerald and Roma and then into Brisbane. One has to pass over the Carnarvon Developmental Road, which would provide an alternative all-weather road link between north Queensland and south Queensland. We all know that the Bruce Highway north of Brisbane, a national highway, gets cut in times of flood. The alternative inland route goes via Emerald and Roma and then into Brisbane. One has to pass over the Carnarvon Developmental Road, which would provide an alternative all-weather road link between north Queensland and south Queensland. We all know that the Bruce Highway north of Brisbane, a national highway, gets cut in times of flood. The alternative inland route goes via Emerald and Roma and then into Brisbane. One has to pass over the Carnarvon Developmental Road, which would provide an alternative all-weather road link between north Queensland and south Queensland. We all know that the Bruce Highway north of Brisbane, a national highway, gets cut in times of flood. The alternative inland route goes via Emerald and Roma and then into Brisbane. One has to pass over the Carnarvon Developmental Road, which would provide an alternative all-weather road link between north Queensland and south Queensland. We all know that the Bruce Highway north of Brisbane, a national highway, gets cut in times of flood. The alternative inland route goes via Emerald and Roma and then into Brisbane. One has to pass over the Carnarvon Developmental Road, which would provide an alternative all-weather road link between north Queensland and south Queensland.

Another almost worthwhile project is the Kidman Highway, situated in the western part of New South Wales extending into western Queensland. It passes through some of the worst drought areas this nation has seen. We have all heard stories of the desperate need of those people on the land around Cobar, Nyngan, Bourke, Cunnamulla and St George. I think we all remember how, just two years ago, these people were desperately fighting to
keep the water out of their homes and to get their stock to dry land. They are now confronted with the complete opposite.

There is a proposal by the councils in the Cobar, Nyngan, Bourke, Cunnamulla and St George areas to promote what is called Kidman Way. This requires a large sum of money: something like $30m. Obviously this program could not fund all of that, but a start could have been made on a very worthwhile project in an area that is devastated by drought and has unemployment levels that are masked because farmers are unable to access unemployment benefits as a result of the methodology the Government has used. Another program is going to be denied that would have been worthwhile. It would be a trade route, it would be a tourist route, and it would provide vital infrastructure for generations to come.

One shire in my electorate that has received funding is the Diamantina Shire Council. It received $20,000. Under Fightback, just with the abolition of fuel tax the Diamantina Shire Council is going to benefit by $80,000. Here is $20,000 going to the council of the Diamantina Shire, which is based on Bedouri and Birdsville and has a population of 250 people, but under Fightback we will be giving them at least $80,000 through the abolition of fuel tax alone. They have got major programs out there that they would like to implement. The Diamantina Shire has 1,670 kilometres of roads, but only seven kilometres are sealed; and we all know that Birdsville is the centre of attraction at race time.

The capital grants are not going to address the very real problem of unemployment in Australia. They have certainly failed to recognise the value of the mining and agriculture sectors to our nation. (Time expired)

**Employment**

**Cessnock: International Six-Day Motorcycle Enduro**

Mr FITZGIBBON (Hunter) (1.40 p.m.)—I have a rural constituency and I am concerned about the primary producer. I know them so well that I know that they have never been in such desperate straits throughout our period of government as they were in 1982 when honourable members opposite were in office and showed them no sympathy whatsoever.

When we talk about care for the unemployed, let us get one thing straight: the great schemes to help the unemployed have always come from Labor governments. We had the RED scheme; we had the CEP, and now we have the present program. What have honourable members opposite ever done for the unemployed except bleat senselessly?

However, I want to talk about happier things. All roads lead to Cessnock next week. 'Why?', honourable members might ask. Why would all roads lead to Cessnock? We know that Cessnock is one of the major tourist destinations in Australia because of its coal-mining history, its magnificent wines, the beauty of the Hunter Valley countryside and the charm of its people.

We know that many roads will lead to Cessnock next week, but why will all roads lead to Cessnock? All roads will lead to Cessnock because Cessnock will be a centre of the international sporting stage. All next week the international six-day motorcycle enduro will be held in Cessnock starting next Monday, which will create a worldwide focus on that city. This event is the Olympics of motorcycling in the eyes of the world, moved from Barcelona to Cessnock. Journalists, photographers, and television crews have already converged on the Hunter Valley to cover this event for sports enthusiasts in every continent.

The ISDE has a 67-year history and next week will be only the second time the event has been held outside Europe. About 400 riders from 21 countries will compete. United States of America, Great Britain, Germany, Austria, New Zealand, Canada, Holland, Greece, Italy, Poland, Mexico, France, Spain, South Africa and Sweden are just a few of the countries competing. Australia, of course, has a team.

Motorcycling is not a passion of mine, but it is a global sport and this international enduro is a real coup for Australia. The Federal Government has given $60,000 and the New South Wales Government $30,000
towards the event's administration costs. The Australian Tourist Commission provided a grant for international promotion of the event and to promote Australia as a tourist destination. Qantas, Fraser Motorcycles, Yamaha, Rothbury Estate and Cessnock Toyota are other major sponsors. The event is organised by the Auto Cycle Union of New South Wales.

Cessnock Council has played an important role. Cessnock will be positively humming next week with hundreds and thousands of Australian and overseas visitors. Viewers can watch the action from top spots at zero cost—an absolute freebie, and you do not get many of those these days.

The social action will be no less frantic than the motorcycle racing, with food and wine fairs throughout the week—a week long rage, rage, rage. The police will assist those who attend to enjoy themselves if they behave reasonably sensibly. The international six-day enduro will have benefits for Cessnock, New South Wales, and Australia. The Cessnock economy will receive a $10m boost and the impact on the State of New South Wales could bring a windfall as high as $40m.

So that is why all roads will lead to Cessnock next week. It is a beautiful part of the Hunter electorate, an electorate I am proud to represent. If honourable members are under 99 years of age, they should make the trip. They will be glad they did.

Mr Goodluck—I am sorry; I will not be there.

Mr FITZGIBBON—Longevity has got to the honourable member for Franklin! Remember, Cessnock is just a comfortable 1 1/4 hour's drive north of Sydney. I urge all my colleagues in this place to be in the only place to be next week. Come along to Cessnock, the most exciting part of this nation.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Truss)—Order! In accordance with sessional order 106, the debate is interrupted and I put the question:

That grievances be noted.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Local Government

Mr BROADBENT (Corinella)—There are more than 8,400 volunteer representatives in local government in Australia. The retiring President of the Korumburra Shire Council, Des McCrae, is one. His family has a commitment in other shires around that area also. Councillor Charlie Rundell was last year President of the Pakenham Shire Council—a council that I served on—and it has two retiring councillors, Councillor Charlie Rossetti and Councillor Austin Bastow. They are two long-serving councillors and absolutely dedicated volunteers to their community—they will be missed. At Phillip Island Shire Council, the retiring President, Stan Gates, will be missed. Retiring Councillor Phil Wright gave great commitment to the conservation movement, as did retiring Councillor Anne Davey to the arts.

At Springvale City Council, which had a very difficult year last year with the loss of my good friend and chief executive officer Ian Tatterson, Joan Sheen is the retiring mayor. She is a great woman and someone who should be very proud of her achievements for the year. Councillor Dale Wilson, although he does not vote the way I would like him to vote—and he works for Terry Norris, the ALP member for Dandenong—has made a huge commitment to local government in the City of Springvale. He was defeated in the last election campaign. He is a friend of mine who worked with me on the Western Port Development Council when I was chairman. Noel Trembath is another person who does not vote the way I would like her to vote, but she also served her community diligently on behalf of the City of Springvale.

Former Senator Jim Toohey

Mr SAWFORD (Port Adelaide)—This House yesterday acknowledged the recent death of Senator Jim Toohey. Jim was fondly and respectfully known to many as Gentleman Jim. He was a personal friend, a wise mentor and a source of wise counsel to many in the Labor movement. He epitomised the very best qualities of humankind. He was loyal,
generous, honest and fair and his conciliatory skills in dealing with antagonists were outstanding. He spoke of reason, of fair play, of consideration of all points of view. He was particularly a champion of the underprivileged and his integrity and compassion were admirable.

He was also a person of quiet real courage. He did not walk away from or ignore difficult situations, yet his behaviour in fair weather or foul was civilising. He always strove to improve the situation and was the very essence of civilisation.

He and his wife, Meg, had no children. His relatives, the Labor Party, the hurt and the less fortunate in our nation were his family. I am proud to say that I was one of his children. On behalf of all the members of the Port Adelaide branch of the ALP, I offer our deepest sympathy to his wife, Meg, on the loss of one of Australia's noblest sons.

Employment

Mr PETER FISHER (Mallee)—I want to respond to my ALP colleague the honourable member for Hunter (Mr Fitzgibbon) to tell him why the ALP Government has in fact found it necessary to introduce make-work schemes. Everyone knows it was the Whitlam Government whose mismanagement destroyed our economy in 18 months, and so we had the RED scheme. Now, Labor's destruction of our business infrastructure with high interest rates has done it again, and there is the horror of youth unemployment at 46 per cent. I want to ask the honourable member for Hunter why this latest local government capital works program, allocated out of the Federal Budget, blatantly discriminates against thousands of our unemployed. We should well ask why this Government makes an unemployed person in one town or city in Australia—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Truss)—Order! The honourable member will resume his seat.

Mr Fitzgibbon—I rise on a point of order. Is it permissible for a man to so misinterpret history as to give falsehoods—

Mr Broadbent—What is your point of order?
of nations in Barcelona. I did note, however, at the opening ceremony that many teams from Arab Islamic states contain no women in their ranks and they clearly practise discrimination against women. I would be of the view that the International Olympic Committee should say to those states in which women are not treated as equals that they are not welcome at Atlanta until they treat women athletes as equals.

Quite frankly, the Australian Olympic Team has been blessed with women competitors—and we think of Dawn Fraser. We are very fortunate that Australian teams have had many women competitors, but it is the case that some Arab Islamic states exclude women. Until they stand up and treat them as equals, they ought not to be welcome in the international Olympic arena. I believe that we ought to make that a condition of their presence at Atlanta.

Mr Gene Lobel

Mr Mack (North Sydney)—The Australian system of justice has been perverted by the most powerful, pernicious, amoral, mercenary and unaccountable closed shop union in this country. Truth is almost irrelevant in a system that now has a vicious stranglehold on social and economic life. It is largely a mechanism to protect the wealthy.

In 1984 Alexander MacIntosh, a liquidator from Peat Marwick Mitchell, had Gene Lobel, a shopkeeper at the Cremorne Centre in Sydney, evicted and arrested and had his stock confiscated. After eight years of legal obfuscation and 14 court cases before 22 judges, Gene Lobel, a 71-year-old pensioner with no legal aid, obtained an illusion of justice with the help of a few legal practitioners of conscience. Justice Enderby, with a 151-page scathing judgment in the New South Wales Supreme Court, found 'that MacIntosh acted in contumelious disregard to Lobel's rights' and that MacIntosh's acts were 'unfair and unconscionable'. He further stated that 'what was done was cruel and in bad faith'. Enderby ordered Alexander MacIntosh to pay Lobel punitive damages of $77,000.

Later, MacIntosh's solicitor, John Phillip Kerr, told Lobel, 'We have much longer staying power than you', and an appeal was lodged. Public and private costs to date are around $1.5m. MacIntosh and his legal cohorts are determined to frustrate justice until Lobel breaks under stress or is dead.

Austudy

Mr Snow (Eden-Monaro)—A petition presented in my name today with 645 signatures asks the House to adjust the parental income threshold entitlement to Austudy so that it is the same as the entitlement to family allowance. The petitioners ask the House to grant a non-means tested based allowance and travel allowance for tertiary students who leave their local area to study.

While these were not granted, there were significant improvements to the position of Austudy students in the Federal Budget. For instance, the parental income limit has been raised to $50,000 whereby students may qualify for Austudy. There is a $2,000 optional loan. Even if a person is not eligible for Austudy, he or she can take advantage of that $2,000 interest free loan. In particular, students will benefit from the lowering of the age of independence from 25 years progressively to 22 years by 1995, and in 1993 students will qualify from 24 years of age. So the parental income means test would not apply to those age groups.

In addition, a 20 per cent increase in the personal income test threshold will allow students to earn up to $6,000 in 1993 before affecting their entitlement. The emphasis is on choice and on flexibility for students to choose a level of financial assistance to best suit their needs. A new voluntary supplement will give eligible students an opportunity to trade.—(Time expired)

Employment

Mr Goodluck (Franklin)—Something riled me this morning, and I believe in equity. Somebody said, 'Rage, rage, rage' about motorcycles. I say, 'Jobs, jobs, jobs'. I do not do so in a way critical of anybody, because we have all got a problem. All politicians of all persuasions have got a real problem in overcoming this thing. I do not usually turn on people, but the Minister for the Arts, Sport, the Environment and Territories (Mrs
Kelly) upset me this morning. I have always said quite jokingly that compared to my electorate, the streets of Canberra are lined with gold and everyone has got three or four jobs. In my poor electorate you virtually die down in the gutter in some places, so I make the comparison in a nice, gentle way.

But when I saw the Minister on the front page of the paper today talking about the stupendous Public Service building which is being built in Canberra, and I made comparisons of my poor old electorate in Tasmania, I started to wonder whether equality is always there and whether it is fair or not. There are a lot of young people up there today. There is 30 per cent unemployment in my area. It is not my fault entirely. I accept some of the blame, but we have all got to overcome it—all of us.

Sugar Industry

Mr COURTICE (Hinkler)—Last night in the chamber Liberal Senator Ian Macdonald criticised the sugar industry task force that I am chairing, set up to investigate and to determine a long term growth strategy for the sugar industry. In doing so, that clown insulted the refiners, manufacturers, unionists, millers and growers who have supported this task force and who have supported the initiative of the Government. It highlights that it is only the National and Liberal parties that do not want to work for long term growth. They are committed to the Industry Commission report; and that means zero tariffs, the abolition of acquisition, the abolition of pooling, the privatisation of bulk terminals and a 15 per cent tax to boot. No matter how many times clowns like Senator Ian Macdonald get up and denigrate the sugar industry, they are going to be exposed continually for the fools that they are.

Timber Industry

Mr COWAN (Lyne)—On Saturday last week I attended a meeting in the Gloucester Shire Council area. The meeting concerned the future of the timber industry. It was chaired by Councillor Barry Ryan. The honourable member for Stirling (Mr Ronald Edwards) happened to raise this matter a while ago, so I might mention that he has a nephew who won a gold at the recent Olympic Games, and we congratulate him for that. The people in that area are very concerned. It is a dairy farming and grazing area, and the town is dependent upon the timber industry there. The district is dependent upon the supply of timber to the local mills, but over the years the loggers have been taken out of a lot of the forestry area. A lot of the forest territory within the State has been excluded, both by the Commonwealth and the State. Those people are concerned. They are people who want to work. Unemployment would not be as great—certainly in my area, and in other parts of Australia too—if we would let people work and do the things that they wanted to do instead of stopping them. Even if someone wants to chip the timber on private land he has to go through both Commonwealth and State procedures before he is allowed to sell the timber for chipping.

I want to protest about what is occurring at the present time: to protest on behalf of honest, genuine people who have paid their taxes throughout a lifetime and who want to work for the benefit of this country. (Time expired)

Carers

Ms CRAWFORD (Forde)—I wish to raise an issue which we have had raised for us in the Budget and which has been acknowledged by the Deputy Prime Minister (Mr Howe): the issue of carers. A couple of Saturdays ago the Queensland Council of Carers, for the first time ever in our State, held what was called a carers powwow. A whole range of issues about which carers are constantly concerned was raised. Certainly public transport needs to be taken account of, as does respite care, the age of carers, and the age of the people whom they care for. Those concerns have been met in part by our Budget, and I am delighted for and on behalf of those people. They want not only money but a recognition within the community that the kinds of services which they need can be established and that they can have the opportunity to have access to them. For too long, caring has been a job and a profession that has gone unnoticed. It has largely been the prerogative of women, who often shift from caring for
their own children to caring for the male members of their family and then their parents. The role of carers has at last been acknowledged by the Queensland Council of Carers in their powwow.

Mr SPEAKER—Order! It being 2 p.m., in accordance with sessional order 106A, the time for members’ statements has concluded.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Tax Increases

Dr HEWSON—My question is directed to the Prime Minister. It relates to the Prime Minister’s secret tax plans. Does the Prime Minister agree with former Prime Minister Bob Hawke that he has a credibility problem, and that the foreshadowed tax increases after the next election have fundamentally changed the political debate and left what Mr Hawke called a big question mark and a threat of further taxes hanging over the head of the Keating Government? Given that even Mr Hawke has expressed concern about his secret tax plans, why does he not come clean and tell the people of Australia what extra taxes they will have to pay?

Mr KEATING—It is because the Government has always come clean about tax changes—

Opposition members —Ha, ha!

Mr KEATING—We have reformed the tax system with capital gains taxation, fringe benefits, the abolition of entertainment—the things that you people would never do. We did them all straight up in public and we fought you all the way through the Senate processes to put them into place. We have never had to engage in the sleight of hand you always engaged in to change anything, and we have not here. That is why we have said that, if the revenues, in our opinion, are not responding as currently forecast, then we would give consideration to measures. Instead of saying ‘measures’, we have specified what those measures are.

Mr Filing—Yes, we have discovered that.

Mr SPEAKER—Order! The honourable member for Moore will cease interjecting.

Mr KEATING—Obviously in the event of our deciding to do it, we would make the detailed measures known. It well may be, particularly if the economy responds, that there is no need whatsoever to engage in any changes to the structure of the receipts.

Opposition members interjecting—

Mr SPEAKER—Order!

Mr KEATING—This a question about taxes from someone who wants to put a $30 billion tax on people—$30 billion! This bloke has got more front than Mark Foy's. He wants to put a $30 billion tax on people. In the estimates for this year, total individuals' income tax is $49 billion. He wants to put a $27 billion tax in place. It is well over half of the current income tax collections of the Commonwealth. It is massive; it is gigantic.

Mr Downer—You want to do things unknown.

Mr SPEAKER—Order! The honourable member for Mayo will cease interjecting.

Mr KEATING—And, of course, it would be massively disruptive; it would be hugely disruptive. So do not think you have got something which is a mere bagatelle, a 15 per cent tax or something like that that you try to fuzz up with compensations and the rest—

Mr Taylor interjecting—

Mr SPEAKER—Order! The honourable member for Groom.

Mr KEATING—The fact is that, in the Budget Papers, total individuals' income tax is $49,410m, and you want to impose a tax of $27,000m. You want to impose a tax which is over half the current collections of the income tax. That is what you are about.

Mr Taylor—Tell us what you have hidden.

Mr SPEAKER—Order! If the honourable member for Groom interjects again, I will name him.

Mr KEATING—And you want to give the proceeds to abolishing payroll tax and reducing the excise on petrol—

Mr Tim Fischer—That is right.

Mr KEATING—You want to use up all the money and then try to fund tax cuts out of cuts in government spending which, of
course, you could accomplish only by ripping the social security system to pieces, ripping health to pieces and ripping everything else to pieces. The mistruths which the Opposition is trying to propose are that—

Mr Smith—Mr Speaker, I am reluctant to raise a point of order on the matter of relevance, but clearly the Prime Minister was asked about what his secret tax plans were. It is not a matter for the Opposition’s policies to be debated in the way that he is seeking to do.

Mr Speaker—Order! There is no point of order. The Prime Minister is illustrating his answer.

Mr Smith—I ask you to direct him to come back to the answer to the question.

Mr Speaker—The honourable member will resume his seat.

Mr Keating—What the Opposition is trying to propose—

Mr Tuckey—Mr Speaker, on a point of order: during the honourable member’s address to you, the Prime Minister stood up again, which is not the rule for this place, and was not asked to resume his seat.

Mr Speaker—The honourable member for O'Connor will resume his seat.

Mr Keating—The Opposition is trying to put across the notion that, if it introduces a $30 billion consumption tax, that pays for the tax cuts. It does not pay for the tax cuts. It does not pay for the personal income tax cuts. It pays only for the abolition of payroll tax and cutting the excise on petrol; it does not pay for the tax cuts. The tax cuts can be paid for only by ripping the outlays to pieces, by beating up on the aged, the frail, the sick—

Opposition members interjecting—

Mr Speaker—Order! The House will come to order.

Mr Keating—That is what you are about. That is the only way you are going to get into it. So listen to me, brother: you will be sorry you have heard the word ‘tax’ when I have finished with you. The fact is that these people opposite promise the most savage and vicious change to the tax system in the nation’s history with a level of taxation over half the current level of the income tax for individuals. That is the nature of the change they want to propose.

Mr Connolly interjecting—

Mr Speaker—The honourable member for Bradfield!

Mr Keating—They are trying to shabbily suggest to the Government that we are going to introduce measures in secret when we have already named which measures we would introduce if we found the need to do so. But we believe that, as the economy picks up, the likelihood of our needing to do so will be greatly diminished.

Health System

Mr Gibson—Can the Prime Minister tell the House what measures the Government has introduced to ensure that Australia has a viable health system capable of providing care and hospital treatment to all Australians regardless of their income?

Mr Keating—The change which the Government has foreshadowed in the Budget, a further $1.6 billion applied over six years for public hospital access under Medicare, will make a great health system even greater, a secure health system even more secure, a fair health system even more fair, and a decent health system even more decent. That is what it will do. By injecting a further $71m over the next two years to target areas where there are long waiting lists, it will especially help the aged who need elective surgery—it may not be acute surgery, but it will enable important elective surgery to be undertaken—by such things as providing places in private hospitals, making operating theatres available for longer periods of time and instituting a better booking and accommodation system for hospitals to see that people are accommodated. The measure would be to allow public patients access to public hospitalisation on the basis of clinical need rather than insurance.

That goes together with the age care policies of the Government: in home and community care, which has revolutionised care for the aged in this country, support for carers and respite care for carers who are
looking after dementia sufferers—people who never have any time off from the burden of carrying a very sick person with them or caring for them day in, day out and year in, year out—and support by means of the increase in the domiciliary nursing home benefit. As well, there is support for dementia sufferers, a growing problem in Australia, with an additional $31m over five years for the dementia program.

Again, this is in contrast to what has been proposed by our opponents in relation to health care. They propose a policy to completely gut and wreck our health care policy. We had a most extraordinary explanation of the policy by the honourable member for Mackellar a week ago when he said to the Australian Association of Surgeons:

Basically, our policy requires doctors to set their own fees.

The Opposition has already said it would negotiate the schedule fees with the AMA, an approach which would immediately raise the schedule fees by 30 per cent. He went on to say this:

The AMA will continue to recommend a schedule fee, but the point we want to make is that this has nothing to do with the Government.

In other words, the running of a medical system has nothing to do with the Government, and if a doctor does not follow that schedule it has nothing to do with the AMA. It is nothing to do with the AMA if a doctor does not follow that schedule, and it is up to the doctors to decide whether they want to charge a particular fee. In other words, it is up to the doctors to do what they like and charge what the market will bear. He went on to say:

There won't be a repetition of what happened under our previous government—that is the Fraser Government—of the Government pretending it controlled medical fees. That is not our job.

In other words, he was saying, 'It is not our job to run a national health system; it is not our job to give people access to decent medical protection; it is not our job to keep the national health costs within the reasonable bounds, which at the moment are around 8 per cent of GDP and 12 per cent in the United States; it is not our job. We will basically leave it to the doctors. We will basically let the doctors charge what they like and the AMA can set the schedule fee. We will have no truck with unions, except the doctors union which will capitulate before we even begin'.

Mr Sharp—Mr Speaker, I rise on a point of order which deals with the matter of relevance. The question the Prime Minister was asked was: what measures has the Government introduced to make the health system more viable? I suggest that the answer that we are now getting from the Prime Minister bears no relevance to the question. I ask you to rule the Prime Minister out of order.

Mr SPEAKER—Order! The honourable member will resume his seat. The Prime Minister is in order.

Mr Snowdon interjecting—

Mr SPEAKER—Order! The honourable member for the Northern Territory will cease interjecting.

Mr KEATING—This attitude carries across into aged care. The coalition has no aged care policy. Fightback! does not even mention aged care.

Mr Tuckey interjecting—

Mr SPEAKER—Order! The honourable member for O'Connor will cease interjecting.

Mr KEATING—The tragedy of the US system has led to what is known in the United States as granny dumping. Each year thousands of elderly parents are abandoned by their families because they cannot afford the medical costs of caring for them. The headline of a story in the Sydney Morning Herald reads 'Dad got old so they dumped him'. The article states:

Increasingly, families pinched by rising medical costs of ageing parents and the strain of raising their own children are taking the radical step of abandoning the elderly, say experts on ageing. Granny dumping, as it is called, was unheard of 15 years ago, but now the anecdotal evidence tells us the trend has become somewhat apparent.

Honourable members interjecting—
Mr SPEAKER—Order! There is far too much noise.

Mr KEATING—This is the sort of callousness—

Mr Goodluck—Mr Speaker, I raise a point of order. I find what the Prime Minister is saying most offensive.

Mr SPEAKER—Order! The honourable member for Franklin will resume his seat.

Mr KEATING—Look at all the things this Government has done: geriatric assessment; the home and community care program to help the elderly at home; the hostel program, which is growing and which takes people who are modestly ambulant and who may require some medical attention, and which has provided enormous growth in accommodation; the nursing homes; the dementia units; the carers; and the dementia respite services. When did the coalition ever have such comprehension about the aged? When did it ever care?

Mr Goodluck—Always. Look at what we did, not like you.

Mr SPEAKER—Order! I warn the honourable member for Franklin.

Mr KEATING—You turned the AMA loose on the elderly; you turned the doctors loose on the elderly—and the result will be a cost that they cannot possibly afford. That is why Medicare and the Government changes stand as a bulwark for ordinary Australians to get access to decent medical care against the ravages of the group you would turn with your support against them.

Opposition members interjecting—

Mr SPEAKER—Order! There is far too much noise in the chamber. Honourable members on both sides will cease interjecting. If the honourable member for Franklin rises in his place like that again, I will name him.

Mr Goodluck—I was straightening my coat.

Mr SPEAKER—The honourable member for Franklin!

Budget Aggregates

Mr REITH—I have another question on secret taxes, this time directed to the Treasurer. It is on the question of how he determined the need for these taxes, and follows the Prime Minister's last answer. I ask the Treasurer why he has not presented a revised table 7 on page 149 of the One Nation document which shows Budget aggregates up to the year 1995-96. Why was it possible to present that table in February but apparently impossible to present it to the House today? Is it because to revise the table will only highlight the Government's $50 billion funding hole and its secret tax proposals for after the next election?

Mr DAWKINS—If there is one thing on which this Government will not be lectured by the Liberal Party it is the quality of our Budget documents. When the Liberal Party was last in power, what did we get? We got the estimates of the outlays for the Budget year alone. Now we get the Forward Estimates of outlays, first of all for the Budget year and then for the out years. That has been a major reform in Australia which has made the quality of our Budget documentations the equal of, if not better than, any in the world. So we will not be lectured by you about these particular matters.

It has never been the case that Budget documents have included forecasts of growth for anything but the Budget year, and that tradition has been followed on this occasion, quite properly. What then happens is that certain assumptions are made about growth for the Forward Estimates period. The assumptions about growth in that period are, I think, conservatively assumed as between 3 1/2 and 4 per cent. That is the basis on which the Forward Estimates of outlays are constructed. It is the case that if a similar assumption were made in relation to the revenues, there would be in prospect in 1995-96 a deficit in the order of 1 1/4 per cent of GDP. This is not a secret. This is something which is spelt out, not only in the Budget Papers, but in my speech as well. So those people who think they have uncovered some secret only have to look as far as the Budget Speech to find it. It was only a secret until 7.30 on Tuesday night, when the whole world knew about it.

We are not here putting together the Budget for 1995-96; we are putting together the
Budget for 1992-93. If it is necessary, in the context of actual growth between then and now, for us to consider and maybe implement other revenue changes in order to maintain a Budget deficit between half and one per cent of GDP then we have indicated the areas that we would look at. Again no secret: there is a reference to those matters in the Budget Papers and in the Budget Speech. As the Prime Minister has said today, it may well not be necessary for us to resort to any of those changes, but if at a time closer to the next election we want to maintain the option of considering those options, we will release the details of them.

Economy

Mr LA VARCH—My question is directed to the Treasurer. What action is the Government taking to improve the international competitiveness of the Australian economy?

Mr DAWKINS—Mr Speaker, how long have I got?

Mr Chaney—Until the next election.

Mr Costello—Not long!

Mr SPEAKER—The honourable member for Higgins will cease interjecting.

Opposition members interjecting—

Mr SPEAKER—Order! The House will come to order!

Mr DAWKINS—Those opposite are beginning to learn something about international competitiveness, not on the basis of their own inquiry, not on the basis of their own policy formulation, but on the basis of learning from the demonstrations that we have provided over the last nine or so years. We commenced the task of converting this economy from the museum economy that we inherited into one which was capable of competing with the world. Of course, the Leader of the Opposition—

Mr Smith—You don’t even know what—

Mr SPEAKER—Order! The honourable member for Bass will cease interjecting.

Mr DAWKINS—He knows only too well what it was like being the curator of this particular museum. He actually did try to do a few things about it, but he was always knocked over by those in cockies corner who wanted to maintain the museum quality of the Australian economy, just as they have maintained the museum quality of their own Party.

On day one we started trying to make up for the lost time during which the Liberal Party presided over this economy—whether in relation to what we have done with corporate taxation, floating the dollar, changing the basis of support for industry, or providing a billion dollars worth of support for our exporters through a number of schemes. We have also introduced accelerated depreciation and further taxation incentives to make investment in Australia more attractive to Australian companies and also to foreign companies.

Again in this Budget we have increased the support for exporters—a further $75m over three years under the export market development scheme and another $100m of underwriting for EFIC. What does the Opposition say about these measures? Its shadow Minister for industry, who apparently wants to oversee the demise of Australian industry, says that by 1995 there will be little need for an export market development grant or other schemes like it. In other words, what the Opposition has in mind is to rip away all of the support that is provided to our exporters to assist them in the task of making and developing their markets in the world.

Consider for a moment this statistic: for 30 years exports in Australia constituted just 15 per cent of GDP—they languished at 15 per cent. Yet in just 10 years that has grown to 22 per cent of GDP, to make us a much more respectable trading nation, one which is beginning to catch up with the rest of the world, having been left behind during the 1950s, the 1960s and the 1970s, when the great expansion occurred in world trade.

We have seen all kinds of manufactured goods being exported in much greater quantity during this period—not just in the last couple of years. There has been an inexorable growth in the export of manufactured goods. In relation to the export of manufactured goods, we have exceeded the performance not only of developed countries but also of the
Asian tigers. This is a record of which all Australians are entitled to be proud.

What do we have from the Opposition? Just this constant carping about how hopeless this country is and how hopelessly uncompetitive it is, to quote the Leader of the Opposition. He never ceases. Not a speech goes by when he does not try to drag this country down, damage its reputation and abuse the Australian workers who have been making such a concerted effort to improve their performance and contribute to the better performance of those companies that employ them.

It does not stop there. Our inflation is below Europe's, much below Asia's, and certainly below that of our major trading partners. Every year—

Dr Hewson—Look at what you have achieved.

Mr DAWKINS—You are the expert on inflation. You want to jack it up by 5 per cent because of the ridiculous—

Dr Hewson—You have put it to 11 per cent.

Mr DAWKINS—We put it to 11 per cent? What was it in 1983? Unemployment at over 10 per cent and inflation at over 10 per cent. What have we done? We have brought inflation down to 2—

Opposition members interjecting—

Mr SPEAKER—Order! The House will come to order.

Mr Smith—Look at your record. You cannot talk.

Mr SPEAKER—Order! The honourable member for Bass.

Mr DAWKINS—Every year we are catching up and passing our competitors as a result of our improved performance on inflation. Then we see the developments in relation to wages policy and industrial relations generally. We now have a structure whereby we can engage Australian working men and women in the task of improving productivity in a way in which not only they will benefit but also their firms will benefit and Australia will benefit as well.

What do Opposition members have to say about this? They simply want to turn back the clock to the days of industrial anarchy in which they are much more comfortable. They simply want to light a thousand Burnies all around Australia, to set one Australian against another, and to damage the progress that has been made in recent times. Australia is making great progress in becoming more internationally competitive. The measures that we announced in the Budget will continue that process during the years ahead.

**Tax Increases**

Mr REITH—I have another question for the Treasurer about his secret tax plans, flowing from his comments at the National Press Club yesterday.

Mr Grace interjecting—

Mr SPEAKER—Order! The honourable member for Fowler will cease interjecting.

Mr REITH—He said that the future extension—

Government members interjecting—

Mr SPEAKER—Order! The House will come to order.

Mr Taylor interjecting—

Mr SPEAKER—Order! The honourable member for Groom might cease interjecting on his Deputy Leader.

Opposition members interjecting—

Mr SPEAKER—Order! Do members on my left want to hear the Deputy Leader of the Opposition or not? I know that honourable members on my right do not, but I would have thought that honourable members on my left might.

Mr REITH—If you have given me the call, I will just get on with it, thank you very much.

Mr SPEAKER—That would be a good idea.

Mr REITH—He said that the extension of existing taxes ‘will not be impacting on the people who will be the beneficiaries of the tax cuts which we propose in 1994-95’. So I ask the Treasurer: given that no-one who earns less than $20,700 will be receiving a tax cut under your proposals—
Mr Brereton interjecting—

Mr SPEAKER—Order! The honourable member for Kingsford-Smith will cease interjecting.

Mr REITH—will the extension of the existing taxes be exclusively on people earning less than $20,700, or will there be a new tax on people who earn over $20,700?

Mr DAWKINS—I am not going to respond to these ridiculous questions from the Deputy Leader of the Opposition. First of all, there is nothing secret about this. He is trying to pretend that there is some secrecy. As we have said in the Budget Papers, only if necessary would we have resort to these matters—

Opposition members interjecting—

Mr SPEAKER—Order! The House will come to order!

Mr DAWKINS—As I said at the Press Club, if we do fractionally better than the 3½ to 4 per cent, which is the assumed rate on which that prospective deficit is based, then we would probably eliminate altogether the deficit in 1995-96. We are not making heroic assumptions of that kind.

Mr Somlyay—What are you going to do? Come clean!

Mr Reith—Why don’t you tell us now?

Mr SPEAKER—Order!

Mr DAWKINS—We are being perfectly open and saying what kinds of things we would look at. Mr Speaker, we may do one or two of them; we may do none of them. But if at the time of the next election we want to maintain that option we will tell the Opposition all about it and we will tell the people of Australia. While we are on the question of robbing people, a few weeks ago—

Mr Filing—You said it!

Mr SPEAKER—Order! The House will come to order. Members on my left will cease interjecting.

Mr DAWKINS—I suggested to the Leader of the Opposition on 5 July that he might answer a number of questions about the impact of the GST.

Mr Tim Fischer—Mr Speaker, I raise a point of order under standing order 145: clearly on this occasion the Treasurer has gone on to a separate answer. He even delineated it for you so that all could see. I ask that you rule him out of order and ask him to resume his seat.

Mr SPEAKER—I have no idea what the Treasurer is about to say. I will listen to what he has to say and then I will decide whether he is in order.

Mr Tim Fischer—He has told you. He indicated it.

Mr SPEAKER—Order!

Mr DAWKINS—The Deputy Leader of the Opposition made some comments in his question about what would be the impact on low income earners. I just want to make some observations about the impact of his proposals on low income earners, particularly those who are elderly.

Mr Tim Fischer—Mr Speaker, I again raise a point of order under standing order 145. Now that you have heard the additional comments of the Treasurer, he has clearly moved off his previous specific answer. He has made the transition and as such he should be ruled out of order.

Mr Beazley—Mr Speaker—

Mr SPEAKER—Order! I might just rule on the point of order. The Treasurer has specifically said that he was going to respond to a matter raised by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition in his question. The Treasurer can respond to it. I have said frequently in the past that Ministers can illustrate their answers. The Treasurer will answer the question.

Mr Tim Fischer—Another subject.

Mr SPEAKER—Order!

Mr Tim Fischer—Another occasion.

Mr SPEAKER—if the Leader of the National Party continues to interject, I will deal with him.

Mr DAWKINS—I do not know why the Opposition is frightened of the people of Australia understanding its wonderful proposals. Let me illustrate, as you invite me to do, Mr Speaker, an example of someone—
Opposition members interjecting—
Mr SPEAKER—I did not invite you.
Mr Tuckey interjecting—
Mr SPEAKER—Order! If the honourable member for O'Connor interjects again, I will name him.

Mr Smith—Mr Speaker, I raise a point of order: I ask you to direct the Minister to answer the question in accordance with procedures of this House under standing order 145. You did not extend to him an invitation to talk about GST—

Mr SPEAKER—Order! The honourable member for Bass will resume his seat. The Treasurer is answering the question and the Treasurer will do so without interruption.

Mr Chaney—He is not answering the question.

Mr SPEAKER—Order!
Mr DAWKINS—Under an alternative proposal of which I have become aware, there is a proposal to provide compensation for certain people in response to certain tax increases. But this compensation package is full of holes: it applies only to those who are over 60 in 1994; it applies only to the money that earned interest in 1992-93; and to qualify for full compensation you need to have an annual income in 1993-94 below $20,000. If you are 59 or under in 1994 you would be robbed of at least 4½ per cent of your savings and those opposite would give you nothing back.

This proposal involves taking 4½ per cent of your savings and getting nothing back as a result of some alternative proposals that are around. If you have a superannuation pay-out or a life insurance pay-out in late 1993—that is late next year—then, again, part of its value will be wiped out and no compensation will be given even if you are over 60 at the time. If you reach the age of 65 and retire in mid-1994, after a year on anything more than about three-quarters of average weekly earnings, again, this proposal gives no compensation for the robbery of at least 4½ per cent of your savings.

This is a secret tax if ever there was one: a secret tax to plunder the savings of the elderly in Australia, to jack up inflation in a way which simply eliminates the value of their savings and provides no compensation for it.

Honourable members interjecting—

Mr SPEAKER—Order!
Mr DAWKINS—if any people have a problem in explaining themselves, they are sitting right over there.

National Drought Policy

Mr HULLS—My question is directed to the Minister for Primary Industries and Energy. I refer the Minister to his announcement earlier today concerning the Commonwealth's agreement with the States for a national drought policy. Could he inform the House of the significant features of the program and its importance to the farm sector?

Mr Sinclair—Mr Speaker, I raise a point of order. Standing Orders do not permit a Minister to make a statement on policy. I suggest to you that the question is entirely out of order.

Mr SPEAKER—Would the honourable member for Kennedy repeat the question.

Opposition members interjecting—

Mr SPEAKER—Order! While the question was being asked I was reading a missive from the honourable member for O'Connor. The honourable member for Kennedy might repeat the question and I will then rule on the point which has been raised by the right honourable member for New England.

Mr HULLS—Thank you, Mr Speaker. My question was directed to the Minister for Primary Industries and Energy and it is in relation to an announcement earlier today of an agreement between the Commonwealth and the States for a national drought policy.

Mr SPEAKER—Order! If the question was about an announcement that has already been made, that is not the Minister announcing policy. The Minister can answer the question.

Mr McGauran—Let him finish the question.

Mr SPEAKER—Order!
Mr CREAN—I thank the honourable member for his question.
Mr Martin interjecting—
Mr SPEAKER—Order! The honourable member for Macarthur will cease interjecting.

Mr CREAN—I am very surprised that the National Party, which has been clamouring for months for us to detail what we have done about drought, now wants to quieten us. It is only because it knows that, for the first time, the policy is coming to grips—

Mr Sharp interjecting—

Mr SPEAKER—Order! The honourable member for Gilmore will cease interjecting.

Mr CREAN—The agreement that I announced today with the States and which came on the back of the Budget on Tuesday night is an historic breakthrough in drought policy for this country. It is radically different from what we had previously which, in the main, relied on treating drought in isolation and waiting for it to happen before measures were taken to remedy it; as distinct from our policy which sees it as part of an integrated package of reform for sustainable farm practices as well as it being a pro-active strategy. It is also a policy which strengthens and drives the long term sustainability which is the real challenge facing agriculture today.

The elements of the agreement that I have made with the States which reflect, in part, on announcements in the Budget are: firstly, a revamped rural adjustment scheme which will provide new money, the ability to review the adequacy of the funding, and the ability to deal with extreme drought. It therefore provides for the future as well as the immediate concerns and makes provision for those suffering from extreme drought now to be able to access up to 100 per cent interest subsidies. I ask honourable members on the other side of the House to indicate to me who else can have access to that sort of entitlement.

In addition to the matters associated with the rural adjustment scheme, we have also amended the income equalisation deposit scheme—by lowering the level of the withholding tax and altering the ceilings to make them more advantageous to the farmers—to enable them to reinvest the interest earned. In addition to those changes to the income equalisation deposit scheme, we have also introduced a new scheme—a farm management bond—which will enable interest earnings on 80 per cent of the deposit as distinct from 61 per cent of the deposit. This recognises the ability to access drawings on that fund in circumstances of drought and other natural disasters.

The Commonwealth is also committed to significant expenditure in education and training to enable people to better prepare themselves and manage for drought. It has provided funding for the communication of new drought strategies and increased expenditure on R & D for climatology research. It is a package for the future but it also addresses the present. I think that it ought to be warmly embraced by all sections of this House.

Let me say in conclusion that our drought policy is yet another example of the ability of this Government to deliver sound policy outcomes. In all the years in which those on the other side of the House had to deal with this they allowed practices to develop that discriminated against good farmers, that encouraged bad farming practice, that encouraged the handout mentality and that worked against sustainable and environmental practices on the land. Most importantly, they allowed the rorting to occur that forced the changes that we had to embrace in drought policy.

Why did those opposite allow that to happen? It was because the National Party, particularly in Queensland, would not allow any change, despite what its members clamour for. Not only did they have their nose in the trough they also had their heads in it when it came to rorting the system. The coalition governments, both Federal and State, were not prepared to take them on.

We now have a national drought policy which is truly a nationally integrated scheme. It will enable farmers to manage their business through management training, research and development and taxation incentives. It is a significant structural initiative and it is one, as I say, that the House ought to acknowledge. Finally, I take the opportunity to thank my State counterparts on the Australian Agricultural Council, which I must
say thankfully did not include Wal Murray, for their efforts and cooperation in cementing this policy.

Tax Increases

Mr TIM FISCHER—I ask the Prime Minister another question about Labor’s secret taxes and plans to hit the pensioners. Is the Prime Minister aware that Budget Paper No. 1 shows that a new form of tax through alterations to the assessment of income will apply on pensioners from 1 September next year, after which date—under Labor’s secret tax agenda—the accruing capital gains and losses will have to be listed? Will the Prime Minister confirm that this will see pensioners lose $64m in 1993-94 rising to $85.5m the following year, without compensation? Will it wipe out the effect of the actual $1 January pension increase? What other secret taxes will the Prime Minister be placing on pensioners and retirees?

Mr KEATING—Anything the Government has is explained in the Budget Papers and by definition it is not secret. There is no point in you trying to get up and propose that something even you can understand in the Budget Papers is secret because if you can understand it, the whole world can understand it. This is the party that let the pension fall to 22 per cent of average weekly earnings.

Mr Reith—Answer the question.

Mr SPEAKER—Order!

Mr KEATING—This is the group that opposes all the changes that we have put through over a period to improve the lot of the aged, and this is the crowd which will now stand up and try to—

Mr Lloyd—Come on, answer the question.

Mr SPEAKER—Order! The Deputy Leader of the National Party will cease interjecting.

Mr KEATING—oppose the changes which the Government is seeking to bring to Medicare so there will be a greater level of access for the aged—ease of access—to the public hospital system which, of course, worries them enormously.

As I said earlier, in the comprehensiveness of the Government’s policies over time we have established an assets test—which the Opposition opposed—tightened up the income test, which you now refer to, and extended home and community care for proper geriatric assessment. As if you ever cared whether people were properly assessed. We are supporting people in their homes who do not want to be put into institutions, or who do not need to be, unlike in the past when quite healthy aged people were put into nursing homes with acutely sick people. Psychologically those people deteriorated because they were in a hospital with acutely sick people even though they were simply aged and were not able to be cared for. You did not care. What you would do now is surrender their fortunes to the doctors, who would charge what they liked. You would let them bear the brunt of it. As we said, we would end up in the position in this country where people could not afford proper care for the aged. Against all of that background, against everything that the Government has done for the aged—whether it be in relation to home and community care, the hostel program, dementia carers and dementia sufferers, the nursing homes—

Mr Tim Fischer—Mr Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The question specifically related to a new accrual unrealised capital gains tax. The Prime Minister has not answered the question, and I ask you to ask him to do so.

Mr SPEAKER—Order! The Leader of the National Party will resume his seat. I call the Prime Minister.

Mr Smith—are you going to rule on the point of order?

Mr SPEAKER—Order! If the honourable member for Bass continues to interject I will deal with him.

Mr KEATING—Against all that background, this crowd over here has the hide to be asking questions which it says are about the aged. My colleague the Minister for Social Security dealt with this question in fine style yesterday. He explained it, and I can add nothing to what he said.
**Migrant Language Education**

Mr MELHAM—Can the Minister for Employment, Education and Training advise the House what measures were taken in the Budget to help those migrants with an English language difficulty to find easier access to the work force? Is there still evidence of outdated attitudes towards migrant workers of non-English background in some sections of the community? Is it the Government’s intention that its Budget measures should also deal with these attitudes?

Mr BEAZLEY—I thank the honourable member for Banks for his question. The Government will spend an additional $105m over the next four years to help overcome language barriers hindering migrants’ effort to find jobs. Together with current Budget allocations being transferred to DEET, a total of $309m will be made available to help these job seekers. The additional funding will provide English language training and income support for approximately 38,000 job seekers registered with the CES who would otherwise not have had access to ESL assistance and little chance of obtaining employment. That is terribly important in these circumstances where the process of restructuring which is going on in Australian industry is depriving many of the workers who have come to this country and made a major contribution of the opportunity to work, because lack of English language skills is an enormous disadvantage. It is absolutely important that we put in place the additional expenditures, naturally enough opposed by the Opposition, that are entailed in this Budget.

The honourable member also asked me whether or not there is any evidence of outdated attitudes in the community to our migrant community, to work practices in the migrant community, and to English language difficulties in the migrant community. It recently came to my attention that the Leader of the Opposition had something to say on these matters at a gathering of Italian businessmen at the Abruzzo Club in the Wills electorate. He told those businessmen by way of introduction:

I am having something of an Italian day. I guess in the sense that this morning we were at a salami factory and I have tried now four or five times, having tried to make a salami, to wash my hands to get rid of the smell. I have simply become popular with all the dogs in Coburg and Wills, and I haven’t been able to get rid of the smell.

He went on to reveal where it is that he got his information about the community. He said:

I have had, as I said recently at the Assisi Homes function, something of a long-term association with the Italians. They have had a marked influence on my life, as I am sure many people who grew up in my age group will say that to be the case. I remember very vividly reading at an early age the Nino Culotta books, *They’re a Weird Mob*—written by that well known Italian, John O’Grady, I might say— which taught me a lot about ourselves as much as it taught me about the commitment that the Italian migrants made to this country when they arrived, and some of the difficulties they encountered in making what is now recognised as a very major contribution to Australia.

He goes on:

I have one particular memory though, of a workplace where I worked for the summer, a summer job on a number of occasions as a builders labourer and I remember the image that was created by the Italian concreters. You didn’t seem to count the hours, just worked flat out in order to finish the job and the contrast between them and the Australian worker in places in Australia who used to lean on their shovel and complain about how hard the Italians worked has stuck in my mind a very long time.

I unfortunately followed the Italian example.

Mr Filing—Mr Speaker, I raise a point of order. I refer you to standing order 145. What on earth does this answer have to do with the question?

Honourable members interjecting—

Mr SPEAKER—Order! The Minister was asked a question about outdated approaches. He said he was giving an example of an outdated approach. The Minister is in order.

Honourable members interjecting—

Mr SPEAKER—Order! The House will come to order.

Mr BEAZLEY—We must not be surprised when we find that those who regard themselves as having received an education on the issues affecting the migrant communities in
this country by reading the Nino Culotta books are opposing the increased expenditures in a Budget that deals precisely with the problems of those who experience an English language difficulty entering the work force. There is so much in this Budget which is absolutely critical to the ordinary lives of people in this country who are going through or will have to go through a process of having to deal with the consequences of economic restructuring. There is absolutely no sense saying that the market is going to take care of this. It will not.

There is absolutely no chance for people in this situation if they do not have access to the sort of training that is going to be provided by this English language training. There is absolutely no chance for them in the labour market which is going to develop over the next decade. The trends in it and the structure of it are already obvious from what has taken place in the last decade. If we want to find out reasons why in this area, as in so many others, there is a totally and utterly inadequate understanding of that in the Opposition, we need go no further than look: at the terms of that type of address.

Local Government Works Program

Mr McLACHLAN—My question is directed to the Minister for Local Government and Family Support. Yesterday the Minister tabled figures to show how the $345m local government capital works program was allocated by electorate. This morning on radio he said that the allocation to the Prime Minister's electorate of Blaxland was not $20m-odd but probably around $3m to $3.1m. Therefore, why did he say in Question Time yesterday that the seat of Flinders is going to attract $5.4m worth of funding, the seat of Wentworth $2.2m worth of funding and the seat of Ballarat just $2.7m, when he knows all of those figures are wrong? When he said that one of the objectives was to pump an additional $15.7m into the seat of Corinella, was he not misleading the House for the fourth time?

In tabling a document purporting to describe an expenditure of $345m, which adds up to $727m, would he not say that he was somewhat misleading the House again? Did he not say in the adjournment debate last night in answer to an interjection from the honourable member for Corinella, 'I have not misled the House at all'? Did the Minister not in fact mislead the House no fewer than six times in one day?

Mr SIMMONS—I thank the honourable member for Barker for his question. I am pleased that he is interested in this important local government capital works program.

Opposition members interjecting—

Mr SPEAKER—Order!

Mr SIMMONS—Let me make a number of points clear. I tried to do that in the context of the adjournment debate last night when the issue was raised by the honourable member for Isaacs. But let me take the specific example that the honourable member for Barker has mentioned with respect to the Prime Minister's seat. If he goes through and adds up those particular sums by electorate, of course he will get a figure in excess of $345m.

Opposition members interjecting—

Mr SPEAKER—Order! The House will come to order.

Mr SIMMONS—It is very clear to the Prime Minister what the impact is in his electorate because he bothered to read the documents. You obviously did not read the documents, because in the kit that I provided to each and every member of this House—

Mr Taylor interjecting—

Mr SPEAKER—Order! I warn the honourable member for Groom.

Mr SIMMONS—in respect of each and every member of this House, I provided a sheet—

Mrs Sullivan interjecting—

Mr SPEAKER—Order! The honourable member for Moncrieff will cease interjecting.

Mr SIMMONS—I will table it for the information of honourable members—of the Federal division of Blaxland. In that division it clearly indicates that there is an overlap of council areas with electorates. It is very clear indeed.
Mr McGauran—So there is double counting.

Mr SPEAKER—Order! The House will come to order.

Mr SIMMONS—I cannot really apologise if people—

Mr O’Keefe interjecting—

Mr SPEAKER—Order! The honourable member for Burke will cease interjecting.

Mr McLachlan interjecting—

Mr SPEAKER—Order! The honourable member for Barker!

Mr SIMMONS—I cannot really account for those on the other side of the House who are not prepared to read the detailed documentation that I included.

Mr Ruddock—So one and one make three.

Mr SPEAKER—Order! The honourable member for Dundas will cease interjecting.

Mr SIMMONS—Some of your colleagues bothered to read it and they know that what you are saying is an absolute nonsense. All I can say to the honourable member for Barker, the honourable member for Corinella and, indeed, several other honourable members opposite, if they are not interested in the dough, is, ‘Give it back because we have lots of Government members who are quite happy to take it’.

Health Services

Mr PUNCH—I direct my question to the Minister for Health, Housing and Community Services. I ask him: what information is he able to provide to the House on proposed changes to general medical practice? I ask him also: what response has there been to those proposed changes?

Mr HOWE—in response to that question, 80 per cent of Australians will visit a general practitioner in any one year, so it is a question that affects a very large proportion of the Australian population. This Budget marks the start of a new era for general practice. Our reform strategy will end the professional isolation of general practitioners and help them to lift the standard of care for all their patients. We will invest $17m to establish a network of divisions of general practice so that general practitioners can get the sort of professional support that specialists have in hospitals.

These divisions will provide a regional framework to improve general practice in five key areas: firstly, in terms of better after hours and home visits; secondly, in terms of a better general practice locum service; thirdly, by rebuilding the links between general practice and hospitals; fourthly, by involving general practitioners in community health advancement programs; and, fifthly, by developing quality assurance processes for general practice.

We will encourage general practitioners to move to rural areas by investing $8m in the rural incentive package. There are five important elements that form part of that package. We will give relocation grants to doctors who want to move to the country. We will provide training grants to those doctors to enhance their skills for rural work. We will assist country medical students and give financial support to those medical students who accept rural placements. We will give rural doctors locum support so they can continue their further education, and we will give special grants to GPs in very remote areas.

The Government will introduce as part of this statement in the Budget this week an independent general practice accreditation system to promote general practice of the highest quality. It will assist GPs in an accredited practice to improve patient care through an $8m practice enhancement grants program. To further promote high quality general practice, our reform package will strengthen the vocational registration arrangements to encourage doctors to undertake appropriate training before entering unsupervised general practice.

This package of reforms is part of a very extensive process of consultation. The honourable member for Barton asked what the response had been. Doctor Tony Buhagiar, President of the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners was very clear. He said: The Budget demonstrates that the long and intensive negotiation process undertaken by the RACGP,
the AMA and the Government has delivered the framework needed to revitalise general practice. The honourable member for Lowe would like people to believe otherwise. Yesterday on the Romana Koval program, commenting on our general practice reforms, he said:

Oh, most of those things are lifted from Fightback, are lifted from our health policy.

There are only two references in Fightback to general practice. Both references referred to the abolition of bulk billing for all but card holders. Two references—absolutely no policy whatever!

_Opposition members interjecting—_

Dr Bob Woods—This is a joke!

Mr SPEAKER—Order! The House will come to order! The honourable member for Lowe will cease interjecting.

Mr HOWE—This is just another example of the dishonesty of the Opposition, its ignorance of policy development process, its ivory tower approach—

_Opposition members interjecting—_

Mr SPEAKER—Order! The House will come to order.

Mr Smith interjecting—

Mr SPEAKER—Order! The honourable member for Bass as the Leader of Opposition Business gets a fair amount of latitude, but continual heckling and interjecting is not part of that latitude.

Mr HOWE—Let me simply quote Dr Bruce Shepherd, who sent me a writ last night and surely is not my closest friend. What Dr Shepherd said last month about the coalition health policy was this:

For general practitioners it does not specifically address the structural problems facing general practice. The AMA is ensuring the coalition is aware of these difficulties.

In terms of this Government, when we go about the process of policy development, we go about it thoroughly; we go about it on the basis of the widest consultation; we publish reports such as the report on the future of general practice, and we make that the basis of very extensive consultations. So when we are able to announce policy in the House, we know that that policy has substance; we know that that policy is directed towards achieving change that is in the interests of clients, in the interests of patients around Australia. In terms of coalition policy, policy that was not the basis of consultation, policy that people did not know about, essentially—

Dr Bob Woods—Come on; that is rubbish.

Mr Costello—You are making it up.

Mr HOWE—Let me remind you of the elements.

Mr SPEAKER—The honourable member for Higgins will cease interjecting.

Mr HOWE—Let me let you know so that you can tell your constituents what the coalition stands for in this area. Firstly, it stands for the elimination of bulk billing for all but card holders. Tell them about that. Secondly, tell the constituents in your electorates that rather than their being paid 85 per cent of the schedule fee by way of rebate, they will be paid 75 per cent of the schedule fee. Remember also to tell your constituents that the medical benefits schedule that the coalition sees as being relevant is not that set by the Government, but the AMA schedule, which will mean that when your constituents go to the doctor they will pay $31 up front. We are prepared to say what our policy is about. When you seek to steal our policy—and I can understand why you seek to do it—tell people about your policy because it is regressive, it is punitive and it is not good health policy.

Tax Increases

Mr REITH—My question without notice again is to the Treasurer on the question of his secret taxes. I refer him to a newspaper report this morning:

Government sources told the *Financial Review* that the measures, which would raise between $2 and $3 billion, could include the imposition of interest withholding tax on all interest payments to residents.

Moreover, in the *Age* today it is reported:

Sources confirmed yesterday that the biggest tax would be the withholding tax on interest payments. I therefore ask the Treasurer again: will the domestic interest withholding tax be extended to all interest payments at a rate of 48.4 per
cent to help plug the hole in the Budget as foreshadowed in the Budget Papers on page 4.41?

Mr DAWKINS—I have nothing to add to my earlier answer.

Child-care

Mrs JAKOBSEN—My question is to the Minister for Aged, Family and Health Services. Can the Minister inform the House of the public response to the Government's child care policies and the gains in the Budget for families using child care?

Mr STAPLES—The honourable member for Cowan will be very pleased to know that the public response to the announcements in the Budget has been overwhelmingly favourable and supportive. That is quite reasonable when you consider that, for the first time in Australia's history, more than $500m has been spent on child-care by a government. That is obviously in very deep contrast to the policies of those opposite. We hear a lot of talk from those opposite, those plastic glorifiers of the family, but when it comes to reality, when it comes to putting it into practice and putting their money where their mouth is, it is a long way away from theory.

After three decades of their being in government there were only 50,000 child-care places in Australia, and that takes into account the Whitlam years when most of those places were put on the ground. On top of that, there was very little fee relief system to help any of the families that are now assisted. Since that time, in the life of this Government, we have seen three times the number of child-care places added to the system. There are now over 200,000 child-care places in Australia. That is the big difference between us.

In this Budget there will be a 21 per cent increase in child-care expenditure. We are seeing that with the provision of 27,000 new places and we are well on the way to achieving the target which was set in the 1990 election of providing 250,000 places by 1995-96. One of the reasons why people are so pleased about this Budget's response to the issue of child-care is that from 1 April next year families will receive—

Mrs Bailey—How much is this going to cost?

Mr SPEAKER—The honourable member for McEwen will cease interjecting.

Mr STAPLES—up to $250 extra to help with their child-care fees, bringing the total to $4,625 a year for maximum fee relief. One hundred and thirty-five thousand low to middle income families who need that sort of money to help maintain their homes and kids will benefit. Those significant measures build on that record of achievement.

As the honourable member for Cowan included in her question, the point is that this is the attitude and the approach the community support. As the Prime Minister was pointing out the other day, one of the big differences between this Government and those opposite is that they do not bother to consult with the community. The changes in this Budget and the Budgets in the past in relation to child-care are built on firm community consultation. Consultation has been going on in Australia over the last six months and it is very clear that the community supports the Government's approach to child-care and rejects the approach of the Opposition.

In June last year, before any GST came out, Senator Alston, the Opposition spokesperson, said:

The Government has a system which is income tested and, therefore, targeted. We have to look very seriously at whether we think that is more appropriate than our approach.

Of course, he was rolled in his recommendation of the Government's approach when those opposite brought in the GST proposal. If it ever came to pass, which it will not, it would add a tax burden on child-care of up to $130m every year. It will add up to $870 a year for the fees of families using long day care services. It is all designed to redistribute in reverse Robin Hood fashion from the poor to the rich. On top of all of that—

Mr Beale—Hey, have a look up at the Press Gallery. They are all going.

Mr STAPLES—I am not interested in what they are talking about; I am talking to you.
Mr Beale—I thought you were talking to the honourable member for Cowan.

Mr SPEAKER—Order! The honourable member for Bruce will cease interjecting.

Mr STAPLES—The onus is on all of you tomorrow, when your Leader attempts to get up here and respond to this Government’s Budget—

Dr Hewson—Tonight.

Mr STAPLES—You will have to answer tomorrow as well, because what he comes up with will not go anywhere near what he has to deal with. On top of this, you are going to talk about cutting out another $6,000m at least. That is what you claim has to be cut out of this Budget. You come and tell us tonight where you are going to do it. Will it be in aged care? Will it be in health care or will it be in child-care? Show some courage, unlike Mr Kennett. Get up here tonight and tell us all about it. Tell us where you are going to make the cuts. If you do not, you are going to have heaped upon you the contempt and distrust of the Australian electorate that you so justly deserve.

Mr Keating—Mr Speaker, I ask that further questions be placed on the Notice Paper.

Mr Reith—Mr Speaker—

Mr SPEAKER—The Prime Minister has asked that further questions be placed on the Notice Paper.

Mr Reith—Yes, he has. And I am seeking the call.

Mr SPEAKER—I was going to call the honourable member for O’Connor. I will call the Deputy Leader first.

Opposition members interjecting—

Mr SPEAKER—Order! I detect a note from my colleague here on the left that the honourable member for O’Connor had sought my attention before about having the call. I always like to give the honourable member for O’Connor the call whenever I can, but I will defer to his Deputy Leader today.

Mr Reith—Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. I say it was a good choice, without denying the importance of what the honourable member for O’Connor would say.

Mr SPEAKER—We will not have a vote on that.

TAX INCREASES

Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders

Mr REITH (Flinders—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (3.05 p.m.)—I move:

That so much of the standing and sessional orders be suspended as would prevent the Treasurer providing forthwith to the House details of the secret taxes he intends to introduce if Labor is re-elected, including the measures referred to in the 1992 Budget to expand the FBT system, the withholding tax arrangements and the prescribed payments system, as well as giving an indication of the revenue expected to be collected as a result of those measures.

It is simply not good enough for the Treasurer (Mr Dawkins), as he did at the end of Question Time today, in response to my question on this matter to—

Motion (by Mr Beazley) put:

That the honourable member be not further heard.

The House divided. [3.11 p.m.]

(Mr Speaker—Hon. Leo McLeay)

Ayes ................ 71
Noes ................ 67

Majority ............ 4

AYES

Baldwin, P. J. Beazley, K. C.
Beddall, D. P. Bevis, A. R.
Bilney, G. N. Blewett, N.
Brereton, L. J. Brown, R. J.
Campbell, G. Catley, R.
Charlesworth, R. I. Courtice, B. W.
Crawford, M. C. Crean, S. F.
Crosio, J. A. Darling, E. E.
Dawkins, J. S. Dubois, S. C.
Duffy, M. J. Duncan, P.
Edwards, R. F. Elliott, R. P.
Fatin, W. F. Ferguson, L. D. T.
Fitzgibbon, E. J. Free, R. V.
Gayler, J. Gear, G. *
Gibson, G. D. Grace, E. L. *
Griffiths, A. G. Hand, G. L.
Hollis, C. Howe, B. L.
Hulls, R. J. Humphreys, B. C.
Jakobsen, C. A. Jenkins, H. A.
Johns, G. T. Jones, B. O.
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**Mr Speaker**—Is the motion seconded?

**Mr Downer** (Mayo) (3.16 p.m.)—Mr Speaker, this is living proof that the Government is going to introduce a GST should it ever be re-elected—

Motion (by Mr Beazley) put:

That the honourable member be not further heard.

The House divided. [3.17 p.m.]

(Mr Speaker—Hon. Leo McLeay)

Ayes 71

Noes 67

Majority 4

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* denotes teller

Question so resolved in the affirmative.
**Representatives**

**Thursday, 20 August 1992**

**NOES**

- Beale, J. H.
- Broadbelt, R. E.
- Cadman, A. G.
- Carlton, J. J.
- Charles, R. E.
- Cobb, M. R.
- Costello, P. H.
- Dobie, J. D. M.
- Edwards, H. R.
- Filing, P. A.
- Fisher, P. S.
- Gallus, C. A.
- Halverson, R. G.
- Hewson, J. R.
- Howard, J. W.
- Kemp, D. A.
- Mack, E. C.
- McArthur, F. S.
- McLachlan, I. M.
- Nehl, G. B. *
- Prosser, G. D.
- Reith, P. K.
- Rocher, A. C.
- Ruddock, P. M.
- Shack, P. D.
- Sinclair, I. McC.
- Somlyay, A. M.
- Taylor, W. L.
- Tuckey, C. W.
- Wilson, I. B. C.
- Wooldridge, M. R. L.

**PAIRS**

- McHugh, J.
- Scott, J. L.
- Wright, K. W.
- Moore, J. C.
- Peacock, A. S.
- Hall, R. S.

* denotes teller

Question so resolved in the affirmative.

Motion (by Mr Beazley) agreed to:

- That the question be now put.

Original question resolved in the negative.

**MINISTER FOR FAMILY SUPPORT AND MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders

Mr McLACHLAN (Barker) (3.20 p.m.)—I move:

That so much of the standing and sessional orders be suspended as would prevent the Minister for Local Government and Family Support from explaining to the House why he deliberately misled the House on a number of occasions on the subject of the local government capital works program both during Question Time and during the adjournment debate yesterday.

The Minister for Family Support and the Minister for Local Government (Mr Simmons) yesterday deliberately misled this House not once, not twice, but six times.

Mr SPEAKER—Order! The honourable member should not say that the Minister deliberately misled the House. You can only do that by substantive motion, which is a censure motion rather than a motion for suspension.

Mr McLACHLAN—The Minister should explain to the House why he misled the House on at least six occasions yesterday.

Mr Beazley—Mr Speaker, I raise a point of order. You have quite clearly and correctly explained where this motion is out of order and the honourable member for Barker persists. I submit that he is under an obligation to put his motion in order. I am talking about the words 'deliberately misled'.

Mr SPEAKER—The honourable member for Barker is moving a motion to suspend Standing Orders to call upon the Minister to explain why he—in the words of the honourable member for Barker—'misled the House'. To do that is in order. For the honourable member for Barker, in debating the matter, to say that he believed the Minister deliberately misled the House he has to move a substantive motion. It is an unusual way of doing it, but it is in order for him to do it this way.

Mr McLACHLAN—I understand your ruling, Mr Speaker. I think the Minister should explain to the House why, on a number of occasions yesterday, he cited figures which he knew were not accurate. For example, on one occasion he said to the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, the honourable member for Flinders (Mr Reith), that $5.4m would go into his electorate when he knew perfectly well—and it was subsequently explained—that that was not true. In fact, his office has said to other honourable members who have inquired about this that it was only an indicative figure. Either the Minister knew that the Government intended to spend $5.4m in the Deputy Leader's
electorate or he knew that the Government did not. Now he is saying that the figures were notional and the figures were indicative.

Secondly, he said of the Leader of the Opposition (Dr Hewson) that $2.234m would be spent in the Leader's seat. He was not referring to the Leader's posterior; he was referring to the amount of money that the Government expected to expend in the electorate of Wentworth. Later, when he was interjected upon, the Minister referred to the seat of Ballarat and he said, 'Just $2.7m is going to the electorate of Ballarat'. What connotation did the Minister expect this House or the Australian population to put on those remarks? The Minister crowned his fabrication—if I might call it that—by saying that he intended to pump an additional $15.7m into the electorate of Corinella.

If that was not deliberate then it would be extraordinarily foolish. One can only say that without the brains of a sheep one could not make such a mistake. If one had the brains of a sheep I leave it to honourable members' imagination as to what sorts of conclusions one would come to.

The Minister had the opportunity yesterday afternoon and last night to come into this House and correct those statements—in effect, he was called into this House by the honourable member for Isaacs (Mr Atkinson)—but he did not. Not only that, but the Minister also tabled a document which ostensibly was to show the expenditure of $34Sm. In fact, it showed that the expenditure—at least when it was totalled up—amounted to $727m-odd, and of course this was not correct.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Ronald Edwards)—I must interrupt the honourable member for Barker. The Chair does not have a copy of his motion for the suspension of Standing Orders. We will hold the clock until the Chair is given a copy of the motion.

Mr McLACHLAN—The motion is signed and it is in order. I do not expect a Government member to be able to add up, but surely somebody in his office can do so. Therefore, this Minister's efforts in coming in here and saying that these various amounts were to be spread in electorates, which he knew was not true, have to have been deliberate.

I refer to a couple of figures contained in the document which the Minister tabled—one for the electorate of McPherson and one for the electorate of Moncrieff. The document stated that $13,232,000 would be spent in each electorate. The amount was exactly the same for each electorate. Those two electorates are, of course, alongside one another and the councils involved are the same—concurrent. It is perfectly obvious that the average for those two electorates must be half the amount quoted.

Then there was the $20m that was to go to the Prime Minister (Mr Keating)—'notionally', it is stated on the top of this document. Now the Minister says that it is $3m to $3½m. I never knew that 'notional' meant an error of a factor of seven, or 700 per cent. We know that in last year's Budget the error was 100 per cent, but never before has 'notional' meant 700 per cent. In fact, 'notional' means that something is assumed to be correct or valid for a particular purpose. I put it to the Minister that this document had a particular purpose and that was to put it about the Australian electorate and this House that they were going to be the dispensers of Government largesse and the whole population would be the recipients.

The Minister had the opportunity to come into this House last night. He had the opportunity to get rid of the falsity, if you like—or the disgraceful attempt—and to make sure that people understood a deliberately wrong set of figures. The Minister had his chance through the whole of yesterday to do that. He finally came into the House last night during the adjournment debate and, when asked by the honourable member for Corinella (Mr Broadbent), by way of interjection, whether he had misled the Parliament earlier that day, he said:

I have not misled the House at all.

He thereby perpetuated his sixth offence in one day. The Minister sent out a document containing many figures that he knew were wrong. What I am saying to the Minister is that he has an opportunity to stand up now and explain to this House why he perpetrated
those figures last night when we called him in and gave him the opportunity to explain himself.

Mr Simmons—I didn’t rush in.

Mr McLACHLAN—You came in with indecent haste and failed to do something you could have done quite easily had you been genuinely not so bright and had made a mistake in the figures. You did not do that.

Mr Simmons—You didn’t hear my speech.

Mr McLACHLAN—I followed these figures through from the night before, Minister, and I realised straightaway that the figures you sent to my office were wrong because not only did those figures show an unemployment rate for Murray Bridge, which is only a small part of my electorate, but also the same figure was put in for the electorate of Mayo. The figure was 1,294. I notice that at the bottom of the figures contained in the letter that the Minister sent around it is stated, ‘Some rounding errors may occur’. It was some rounding error to go from $345m to $700m and expect everybody to believe it.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I ask that the Minister get on his feet and explain to the House why he did not take the opportunity to come in here and correct the information that he tabled, which was $365m-odd wrong—$17m wrong in regard to the Prime Minister’s electorate—when he had that opportunity. What is more, he has had that opportunity all day today as well. We thought that somebody who had integrity and honesty would have come in here and done that. Our only conclusion is one of two things: either he did not understand the document that he tabled yesterday, which is possible—

Mr Simmons—No, I didn’t—

Mr McLACHLAN—No, the Minister did not. I understand that was possible. But when he did understand the document—because his office told him it was a nonsensical document and he had better straighten it up—he did not take the opportunity to come in here. It is either incompetence or deliberate misleading of this House, or most likely both.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER—In consultation with the Manager of Opposition Business, we have deleted the word ‘deliberately’, because that would put the motion outside the Standing Orders. I need to get the concurrence of the honourable member for Barker and the honourable member for Isaacs. The motion then reads, ‘... misled the House’, so that it stays within the Standing Orders.

Mr McLACHLAN—Then I formally move:

That so much of the standing and sessional orders be suspended as would prevent the Minister for Local Government and Family Support from explaining to the House why he misled the House on a number of occasions on the subject of the local government capital works program both during question time and during the adjournment debate yesterday.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER—Is the motion seconded?

Mr ATKINSON (Isaacs) (3.32 p.m.)—Yes.

I have been somewhat concerned since the Minister for Local Government (Mr Simmons) came into the House last night and responded to us on this question of the way that the figures are added up for the various electorates. The Minister came in during my presentation. What he did after I had completed my adjournment speech was actually endeavour to put me, as a member of parliament, down. I would like to quote from his adjournment speech last night. He said:

The important thing that perhaps the honourable member for Isaacs has not realised—and he is a reasonably new member of this House—is that these particular grants include capital works programs for councils where there is an overlap of electorates.

Local government areas do not necessarily coincide with Federal division boundaries. That is a typical way of trying to put off the facts. The fact is that the honourable member who spoke prior to me in the adjournment debate last night, the honourable member for Corinella (Mr Broadbent), and I have both been involved in local government—he as a councillor for the Shire of Pakenham and as Shire President, and I as a councillor for the Council of Mordialloc and as Mayor of Mordialloc, which is within the electorate that we were actually referring to during the evening.

So I do happen to understand the basis of boundaries. That is part of the reason that I
indicated last night that when we are talking about $4\frac{1}{2}$m as the figure for the City of Springvale and an area of 300 houses being in the Federal electorate of Isaacs, we can hardly say that there will be an expenditure of some $4\frac{1}{2}$m in the electorate of Isaacs and then go ahead and say that the same amount of money will be expended in the electorates of Dunkley and Corinella and, presumably, in the Labor held electorates of Holt and Hotham.

Mr Cobb—Sheer incompetence.

Mr ATKINSON—I am not sure whether it is incompetence. The thing that concerns me is that when the Minister answered the question yesterday afternoon—in fact, he tabled the document—he was very eager to point out to the honourable member for Corinella that in excess of $15$m worth of funds was going to be provided for the electorate. He said, ‘We are going to pump the electorate of Corinella with $15\frac{1}{2}$m’. He was eager to speak to the honourable member for Ballarat (Mr Ronaldson) about the $2.7$m there.

In real terms, I do not think it was a mistake. I do not think it was a hidden exercise. I think the fact of the matter is that the Government wanted to talk to the media in those local electorates and talk as though a substantial amount of money was going into those electorates. On the basis of the piece of paper I had, which talks about $6.224$m—when we are talking in real terms about $1$m going into the electorate—I can see that the press releases going into my electorate would look substantially different. They would look substantially different going into the electorates of Corinella, Flinders and Wentworth, the electorate of the Leader of the Opposition (Dr Hewson). We are not talking about $2\frac{1}{2}$m. In fact, the Minister said on radio this morning that the figure for the electorate of the Prime Minister (Mr Keating) is not $20$m—because he has been caught out on this figure—it is now somewhere around $3$m.

I support the suspension of Standing Orders because I believe that the Minister in this case has a very clear and precise responsibility to answer to this House as to why he would want to put out these misleading figures. When we look at the city of Brisbane and its various municipalities, we see that the municipality of Moreton has no figure beside it. If the criteria used for some of the electorates in Victoria were used in Brisbane, one would assume that there would be a figure beside it. The figures show that there is a minimum of 10.9 per cent for the funding of certain categories. For example, in Pyalong an amount of $10,000 is being provided to a shire which has 3.8 per cent unemployment. In fact, there are 16 people unemployed in that small area. I assume that the $10,000 will provide employment for one person for six months. One wonders where the rest of the money will come from to keep that person employed. We also need to look at other areas. I think it is very important to note that the Minister has said that this matter has not been looked at on the basis of preference for Government seats. If honourable members look at the City of Caulfield, which has an unemployment rate of 11.8 per cent—(Time expired)

Mr SIMMONS (Calare—Minister for Family Support and Minister for Local Government) (3.37 p.m.)—I am more than happy to respond again, as I did last night, to some of the issues that have been raised.

Mr Cobb—I hope it will be better than that.

Mr SIMMONS—I would like the same courtesy extended to me, as I have extended in regard to this very serious motion moved against me in the House today, to give me the opportunity to respond. I would expect honourable members opposite at least to give me the courtesy of being able to respond in a reasonable way.

I will try to explain in words as simple as possible—I do not have the benefit of an overhead projector to draw pictures for some honourable members here, who seemingly cannot understand straightforward information—information that was provided to every honourable member. I will refresh the memory of honourable members with the notions behind this particular program. It is a capital works program that will be implemented over the next couple of years. I believe that nobody from the Government has
attempted to represent that program as larger than it actually is. I will attempt to explain why that is the case.

In providing the breakdown of the program on an electorate basis we have followed established practice. I will give honourable members an example of what I mean by ‘established practice’. Virtually every State in the Commonwealth over the last couple of weeks has been provided with details of the financial assistance grants for the current year. The honourable member for Dobell (Mr Lee) has just drawn to my attention a copy of the details of the financial assistance grants in his electorate of Dobell. It clearly states that the local government areas of that division include part of the city of Gosford, part of the Lake Macquarie city area and the whole of the Wyong Shire. Because the honourable member’s electorate includes parts of those councils he is given the entire information.

I could go through the financial assistance grants and give an electorate breakdown on exactly the same basis as I provided to the House yesterday. I have no problem in doing that. No-one in his right mind would surely go to the trouble of just adding up the figures electorate by electorate without realising that there would be an element of double counting—simply because there are parts of local government areas within those boundaries.

For a council which falls in more than one electorate, I suggest, with all due respect, it is not possible to divide the council’s allocation between different parts of its area. To do so would be to usurp the role of councils and their particular rights. I suggest that it would also destroy the council’s flexibility in administering the scheme—a flexibility that is clearly important to the success of the program. Electorate boundaries had absolutely zilch to do with the determination of this program.

The only reason that we provided that information on an electorate boundary basis was simply that we had received requests from honourable members to do so and, I might say, requests from those opposite. I think it is worth while for honourable members to have a look at some specific examples in terms of this particular distribution. The electorate of the Prime Minister (Mr Keating), Blaxland, has been cited. I repeat, as I have stated on a number of occasions, that, in the Prime Minister’s allocation, it is clearly shown on the information that he received, in the same way it is clearly shown on the information received by every single member of this House, where there are overlapping council boundaries on particular Federal divisions. It clearly shows that the councils of Bankstown, Canterbury and Fairfield overlap. I understand, from memory, that they overlap with three or four other electoral divisions. It clearly states, ‘Denotes local government area in more than one electorate’. For the record, I will table that information with respect to the detail for the Federal electorate of Blaxland.

There have been a few others cited. What I did, anticipating that this sort of nonsense might occur during Question Time today with people attempting to distort what I am saying, was quickly to go through the information to see whether I could find one electorate where all of the local government boundaries were included within that division. The first one I found was the electorate of my colleague opposite the honourable member for Bendigo (Mr Reid). In the Federal division of Bendigo there are nine or 10 councils, none of which overlaps any other boundaries. There is clearly there the usual disclaimer that if there were a local government area within more than one electorate boundary it would have been designated with an appropriate asterisk.

Let me take the example of the honourable member for Barker (Mr McLachlan). He also has a very large number of councils within his division. But some of them—Mannum, Murray Bridge and Ridley—overlap a number of other council areas and Federal divisions. But it would have been absolutely impertinent of me to try to apportion that segment of the division of Barker into his electorate and into the adjoining electorates. To do so, I would suggest, would be to usurp the rights of the honourable members concerned.

Let me take the example of the Leader of the Opposition (Dr Hewson). On the current electoral boundaries for the division of Wentworth, Sydney Council and South Syd-
ney Council are included partly within that division. Again, that information is clearly stated within the information that was provided to each and every single member of this House.

Ballarat was referred to, and I certainly did mention it yesterday. For the information of honourable members, a quick look shows there are eight or nine councils there. One of them, the Grenville Council, overlaps with another electorate. So the figure of $2.7m or thereabouts includes all of those councils with the exception of part of the Grenville Council, which has an allocation of a little more than $142,000.

Corinella includes the council divisions of Berwick, Cranbourne, Dandenong, Frankston and Springvale, parts of which are in the division of Corinella, but Wonthaggi and Phillip Island are totally included within that division. That information was clearly provided to the honourable member for Corinella (Mr Broadbent), as it was provided to every other honourable member in this House.

We had the example of the Gold Coast divisions mentioned. The divisions of Moncrieff and McPherson on the Gold Coast certainly share exactly the same councils, the councils of Albert, Beaudesert and Gold Coast. Clearly shown on the documents provided are the examples of where they overlap. Again, in the interests of sharing this with people who cannot understand basic information, I will table that material for honourable members.

Let me make a couple of other points, as I did during Question Time. If those opposite are not enthusiastic about this program, they should have the decency to write to their local councils and point out that they have a particular problem. They should do that. I can assure honourable members that local government in Australia is very supportive. I quoted partly yesterday some of the comments made by the President of the peak organisation, the Australian Local Government Association, Councillor Graeme Frecker. Those comments were totally supportive.

As Councillor Frecker said, he would have liked every one of the 915 local government authorities in Australia to share in the capital works program, but he appreciates that it is within the Government's province to set the appropriate macro-economic elements within the Budget context. But, again, he understands and is very supportive of what we are trying to do. All I am trying to suggest is that there are very good explanations of this particular process. For any honourable member simply to take a list of the allocations by division and add them together is to show a complete ignorance. For those opposite to add all of those divisions together—I did not add them all together—and put a total of $700m at the bottom is sheer and absolute nonsense.

Mr Cobb—You did that. You are a liar.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Ronald Edwards)—The honourable member for Parkes will withdraw.

Mr Cobb—But he said he did it.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER—The honourable member for Parkes will not defy the Chair. He will withdraw or I will deal with him.

Mr Cobb—I withdraw.

Mr SIMMONS—I repeat that anyone who simply took all those divisions and added them together on a cumulative basis from one to 130 is either stupid or does not understand the basic information submitted earlier. (Time expired)

Mrs Sullivan—Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I would like to move for an extension of time for the Minister so that he can explain to this House how every word he has said is not flatly contradicted by the electorates within the Brisbane City Council.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER—No; the question is that the motion as moved by the honourable member for Barker be agreed to.

Mr Smith—Mr Deputy Speaker, I seek your indulgence. The Minister has just indicated that he would accept the motion for the extension of time.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER—No; it is not within Standing Orders. The Minister has indicated that he will discuss the matter with the honourable member for Moncrieff.

Question put:
Thursday, 20 August 1992

That the motion (Mr McLachlan’s) be agreed to:

A division having been called and the bells being rung—

Mr Broadbent interjecting—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER—Order! The limit for debate under Standing Orders is 25 minutes. The honourable member for Corinella should understand that. The time allotted for the debate had expired.

The House divided. [3.51 p.m.]

(Mr Deputy Speaker—Mr Ronald Edwards)

Ayes ............... 64
Noes . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 71

Majority ........... 7

AYES

Aldred, K. J.
Andrew, J. N. *
Atkinson, R. A.
Beale, J. H.
Broadbent, R. E.
Cadman, A. G.
Carlton, J. J.
Charles, R. E.
Connolly, D. M.
Cowan, D. B.
Downer, A. J. G.
Fife, W. C.
Fischer, T. A.
Ford, F. A.
Goodluck, B. J.
Hawker, D. P. M.
Howard, J. W.
Kemp, D. A.
MacKellar, M. J. R.
McGauran, P. J.
Miles, C. G.
Nugent, P. E.
Reid, N. B.
Riggall, J. L.
Ronaldson, M. J. C.
Scott, B. C.
Sharp, J. R.
Smith, W. L.
Sullivan, K. J.
Truss, W. E.
Webster, A. P.
Woods, R. L.

NOES

Baldwin, P. J.
Beddall, D. P.
Bilney, G. N.
Breton, L. J.
Campbell, G.

Charlesworth, R. I.
Courtice, B. W.
Crean, S. F.
Darling, E. E.
Dubois, S. C.
Duncan, P.
Fatin, W. F.
Fitzgibbon, E. J.
Gayler, J.
Gibson, G. D.
Griffiths, A. G.
Hollis, C.
Hull, R. J.
Jakobsen, C. A.
Johns, G. T.
Kelly, R. J.
Kerr, D. J. C.
Lavarch, M. H.
Lindsay, E. J.
Martin, S. P.
Morris, A. A.
Newell, N. J.
O'Neil, L. R. T.
Punch, G. F.
Scholes, G. G. D.
Scott, L. J.
Snow, J. H.
Staples, P. R.
Tickner, R. E.
West, S. J.
Woods, H. F.

Reserve Bank of Australia

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Ronald Edwards)—Pursuant to the Reserve Bank Act I present the report and financial statements of the Reserve Bank of Australia for the year ending 30 June 1992, together with the Auditor-General’s report thereon.

Asia-Pacific Parliamentary Leaders Forum

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Ronald Edwards)—For the information of honourable members, I present the report of the proceedings of the inaugural meetings of the

COMMITTEES

Reports

Selection Committee

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Ronald Edwards)—I present the report of the Selection Committee relating to the program of business prior to 12.30 p.m. on Thursday, 10 September 1992. The report will be printed in today's Hansard and the items accorded priority for debate will be published in the Notice Paper for Tuesday, 8 September 1992.

The report read as follows—

Report relating to the program of business prior to 12.30 p.m. on Thursday, 10 September 1992

Pursuant to sessional order 28D, the Selection Committee has determined the order of precedence and times to be allotted for consideration of committee and delegation reports and private Members' business on Thursday, 10 September 1992. The order of precedence and the allotments of time determined by the Committee are shown in the list.

COMMITTEE AND DELEGATION REPORTS

Presentation and statements

1 TRANSPORT, COMMUNICATIONS AND INFRASTRUCTURE-STANDING COMMITTEE—Report—Possible uses of the sixth high power television channel—Motion to take note of paper—Resumption of debate.

Time allotted 25 minutes.

Speech time limits—
First 2 Members speaking—10 minutes each.
Other Members—5 minutes each.

The Committee determined that consideration of this matter should continue on a future day.

2 LONG TERM STRATEGIES-STANDING COMMITTEE—Report—Pattern of urban settlement—Motion to take note of paper—Resumption of debate.

Time allotted 30 minutes.

Speech time limits—
First Member speaking—10 minutes.
Other Members—5 minutes each.

The Committee determined that consideration of this matter should continue on a future day.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Order of Precedence

Notices

1 MR SCHOLES: To present a Bill for an Act to amend the Reserve Bank Act 1959. (Notice given 24 June 1992.)

Orders of the day

1 INDEPENDENCE OF BOSNIA-HERCEGOVINA: Resumption of debate (from 20 August 1992) on the motion of Dr Theophanous—That this House calls on the Australian Government to:

(1) commence formal recognition of the independence of Bosnia-Hercegovina;
(2) assist in the relocation of refugees from war-torn Bosnia-Hercegovina; and
(3) support a peaceful resolution to the crisis in Bosnia-Hercegovina, especially through the UN.

Time allotted 30 minutes.

Speech time limits—
Each Member—10 minutes.

The Committee determined that consideration of this matter should continue on a future day.

Notices—continued

2 MR BRADFORD: To move—That, recognising the important role played by small business in the Australian economy, the Parliament calls upon the Government to reconsider its response
to the report of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology, entitled Small business in Australia—Challenges, problems and opportunities, with a view to implementing fully the committee’s recommendations in chapter 5 of the report, entitled Taxation reform. (Notice given 29 April 1992.)

Time allotted 35 minutes.

Speech time limits—
Mover—10 minutes.
First Government Member speaking—10 minutes.
Other Members—5 minutes each.
The Committee determined that consideration of this matter should continue on a future day.

Orders of the day—continued

3 AGRICULTURAL PROTECTION:
Resumption of debate (from 25 June 1992) on the motion of Mr Cobb—That the Parliament:

(1) welcomes the initial steps taken by the European Community to lower its massive levels of agricultural protection; and

(2) urges that the USA match these reductions in the interests of freeing up world trade in primary products.

Time allotted—any remaining private Members’ business time.

Speech time limits—
First 2 Members speaking—10 minutes each.
Other Members—5 minutes each.
The Committee determined that consideration of this matter should continue on a future day.

Joint Standing Committee on the Parliamentary Zone

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Ronald Edwards)—I present the following report of the Joint Standing Committee on the Parliamentary Zone: Report relating to proposed works in the Parliamentary Zone: National Library lakeside podium, Electricity upgrade, Commencement column plaque, Parliament House—Loading dock carpark/Gardeners’ storage area.

Ordered that the report be printed.

PRESENTATION OF PAPERS

Mr BEAZLEY (Swan—Leader of the House)—Papers are tabled as listed in the schedule circulated to honourable members.

Details of the papers will be recorded in Hansard and the Votes and Proceedings.

The schedule read as follows—


2. ADVANCE TO THE MINISTER FOR FINANCE—Statement of Heads of Expenditure and the amounts charged thereto pursuant to section 36A of the Audit Act 1901.


COMMITTEES

JOINT COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS, DEFENCE AND TRADE—REVIEW OF THE AUSTRALIAN CENTRE FOR INTERNATIONAL AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH

Government Response

Motion (by Mr Beazley) proposed:
That the House take note of the paper.

Debate (on motion by Mr Smith) adjourned.

JOINT COMMITTEE ON THE AUSTRALIAN SECURITY INTELLIGENCE ORGANISATION—THE EFFECT ON ASIO OF THE OPERATION OF THE ACCESS PROVISIONS OF THE ARCHIVES ACT

Government Response

Motion (by Mr Beazley) proposed:
That the House take note of the paper.

Debate (on motion by Mr Smith) adjourned.

SPECIAL ADJOURNMENT

Motion (by Mr Beazley) agreed to:
That the House, at its rising, adjourn until Tuesday, 8 September 1992, at 2 p.m., unless the Speaker fixes an alternative day or hour of meeting.

PERSONAL EXPLANATIONS

Mr RUDDOCK (Dundas)—Mr Deputy Speaker, I wish to make a personal explanation.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Ronald Edwards)—Does the honourable member claim to have been misrepresented?

Mr RUDDOCK—Yes, by the Minister for Employment, Education and Training (Mr Beazley).

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER—The honourable member may proceed.

Mr RUDDOCK—in this respect, as the principal spokesman for the Opposition on matters relating to English language training for new arrivals and for longer term unemployed migrants, I have been the only person on behalf of the Opposition who has addressed this question.

The Minister said that we were opposed to any increase in funding for English language tuition in this area. That misrepresents our position entirely. We have said that programs in this area under Fightback were quarantined—a very important area of expenditure confirmed in our policy documents. Any suggestion that we have been critical of commitments for teaching in this area misrepresents our position entirely.

Mr BEAZLEY (Swan—Minister for Employment, Education and Training)—Mr Deputy Speaker, I wish to make a personal explanation.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Ronald Edwards)—Does the honourable member claim to have been misrepresented?

Mr BEAZLEY—Yes.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER—The honourable member may proceed.

Mr BEAZLEY—I have been misrepresented by the Opposition spokesman on matters relating to migration, the honourable member for Dundas (Mr Ruddock). The statements that he has made in regard to Fightback, about which I had nothing to say, nothing whatsoever, apply to Fightback, which has been quarantined. The matters that are mentioned in the Budget are in addition, and that is what I was speaking about—not the materials that would be referred to by Fightback. In those circumstances, the Leader of the Opposition (Dr Hewson) has said that he has opposed expenditure increases that are contained in the Budget.

MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Medicare

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Ronald Edwards)—Mr Speaker has received a letter from the honourable member for Lowe (Dr Bob Woods) proposing that a definite matter of public importance be submitted to the House for discussion, namely:

The Government’s inadequate health announcements in this year’s budget and its continued inability to undertake the significant structural reform needed to address the crisis crippling Medicare and our public hospital system.

I call upon those members who approve of the proposed discussion to rise in their places.

Dr BOB WOODS (Lowe) (4.02 p.m.)—In this matter of public importance today, we are addressing the fundamental problems facing Medicare in general and hospital Medicare in particular. I guess the first question is: is there a crisis? I do not think that anybody in his right mind can doubt that there is a major crisis. There are something like 80,000 to 100,000 individuals on waiting lists. They are sitting there waiting for surgery, in pain and agony, I might add.

Does the Minister for Health, Housing and Community Services (Mr Howe) care about these individuals? On Tasmanian radio yesterday, he said:

Well, there is elective surgery and there is elective surgery.

More than the number of members required by the Standing Orders having risen in their places—

Dr BOB WOODS (Lowe) (4.02 p.m.)—In this matter of public importance today, we are addressing the fundamental problems facing Medicare in general and hospital Medicare in particular. I guess the first question is: is there a crisis? I do not think that anybody in his right mind can doubt that there is a major crisis. There are something like 80,000 to 100,000 individuals on waiting lists. They are sitting there waiting for surgery, in pain and agony, I might add.

Does the Minister for Health, Housing and Community Services (Mr Howe) care about these individuals? On Tasmanian radio yesterday, he said:

Well, there is elective surgery and there is elective surgery.

He does not give a damn about the fact that these people are in pain and agony. No-one in his right mind has elective surgery unless he is in pain or discomfort. If the Minister, at some stage, is able to grasp that simple, basic fact, then he might move some way down the path of understanding the problem facing this
community in terms of what is happening to Medicare, which this Government introduced.

What else is there to indicate that there is a crisis? We have had 10 years of neglect from this Government. We have private hospitals which are 60 per cent full; we have decrepit public hospitals; we have under-equipped and poorly equipped public hospitals; we have the worst staff morale in public hospitals in history; and we have the worst patient morale in history. The Minister does not have to take my word for it; he can take the word of some of his mates. In Western Australia, the Minister for Health, Mr Keith Wilson, stated:

The truth is hospital Medicare is not a fair and just system that it promised to be and has not been since its inception.

That is one of the Minister's mates. What about some of his other mates? What about Carmen Lawrence? She stated:

The States are unanimous—this is not just her opinion—hospital Medicare is not sustainable without additional funding. Waiting lists will increase. The Commonwealth commitment of universal access will not be able to be met.

Again, Keith Wilson stated:

There are pensioners desperate for hip replacements and our Government is refusing to fund it adequately.

On the other hand, if the Minister does not believe his mates, what about himself? This time last year the Minister said:

Medicare is unsustainable without major changes.

He has not made any major changes. He has reversed the co-payment. For once, I find that I agree with the Minister: Medicare is unsustainable. The Government tries to paint itself as a government of compassion and care. The fact is that it does not give a damn about these problems. These people are just numbers to it. In this Budget, which was the Government's last throw of the dice, its last chance, its terminal Budget, it had an opportunity to introduce good structural reform posed and suggested to it by pretty well every authority. But it ignored and wasted the opportunity.

Maureen Lyster, the Minister for Health in Victoria, which is the Minister's own State, has said:

Everyone recognises that there is a major State.

Yet the Minister still sticks his head in the sand and pretends that nothing is happening. Let us look at the three main Budget areas in regard to hospitals. Firstly, let us look at capital investment. How bad is the problem? In a press club conference the Minister gave a while ago, he said:

It used to be 8 per cent of recurrent funding; it is now down to 3 per cent. The 5 per cent difference represents about half a billion dollars a year.

John Deeble, who makes the Minister look like a right wing ideologue, says that the Government needs $712m a year. What did we get? Did we get half? Did we get $300m? No. Did we get a quarter? Did we get one-tenth? Did we get $70m? Did we get one per cent even? Did we get $7m? We got half of one per cent this year—$3m. It is peanuts; it is a pittance; it is a joke. Royal Adelaide Hospital needs $200m. I do not know where on earth the Government thinks $300m is going to go. It is no wonder every authority around the country is laughing at what the Government is trying to do with capital investment; it is no wonder the hospitals are decrepit; it is no wonder they are falling apart; and it is no wonder patients cannot get good quality treatment.

What should the Government do? Let us look at waiting lists. The Government has made a few gestures about waiting lists. This is, after all, one of the key complaints that people have about Medicare. It is difficult to know exactly how many people are on waiting lists. I think we would all agree that 85,000 is a reasonable figure. Let us ask ourselves the central question first of all: why are they on waiting lists? The fact is that in 1982-83 about 65 to 70 per cent of the population had private insurance. They looked after themselves and they used, amongst other things, the private hospital system. This year, 40 per cent of the population are insured. In the next five years it will go down to 30 per cent. So something like 40 per cent of the population who used to look after themselves
now rely on the public system. But the Government has not put enough money in to take care of them. The system is grinding to a halt. It is like saying to those in the education system, 'Look, we are going to abolish half the private schools, move the kids into the public system and expect the public system to cope without giving it any more money'. That is exactly what the Government has done to the hospital system, and it is not surprising that it does not work.

What does the Government do? It looks at that eternal scapegoat, Bruce Shepherd, and says, 'It's those greedy doctors, you know. They won't do what we want them to do. They are managing a closed shop'. The fact is, firstly, that only a small proportion of those problems are orthopaedic problems and, secondly, the orthopaedic surgeons have said time and time again that if the Government gives them the operating time they will do the operations. There are public hospitals that regularly close at 5 o'clock every evening, so to finish the operating list in time the surgeons have to stop operating some time after 2 o'clock. Many hospitals around Australia have a flexi-day every other Friday. One cannot get into some hospitals on a Friday. People should not get sick every alternate Friday, they might be in trouble. I do not know what sort of health system the Government is running.

What is the solution? Clearly, there is a crisis. Even the Minister has to recognise that. The Government has a bandaid solution. It says, 'We'll throw a bit of money at them. We'll tell them to move public patients into private hospitals and we'll tell them to smarten up their act a bit'. I have no problem with smartening up the act, but putting public patients into private hospitals is as counterproductive a measure as one could possibly imagine.

What is the Government going to do? It is saying to those patients who are privately insured, 'I do not know why you are privately insured. You can get into a private hospital without being privately insured'. What does the Government think they are going to do? They are going to drop their private insurance. If they drop their private insurance, who is going to look after them? The public hospitals. The public hospitals get busier; the waiting lists get worse; and the whole system crumbles even more. The Government has initiated a downward spiral; it is pushing down and down. Anybody with two neurones to rub together could work out what would happen, but the Government is too concerned with the short term; it is too concerned with trying to get itself past the election or even up to the election.

What does the Government need to throw at the waiting lists? The Government has thrown $70m over two years—$35m each year on average. There are about 80,000 patients on the waiting lists. The cost of each admission, on average, is about $3,000. About a quarter of a billion dollars will be needed to treat those patients in private hospitals, and the Government is throwing $35m. Does it really think that will have an impact? It is nuts if it does. It cannot seriously believe that.

I think it was in 1988 that the Minister's predecessor threw some money at the waiting lists. If I remember correctly, $25m was thrown and that was matched by the States. So the total was $50m. What was the impact upon waiting lists then? Big fat zilch. The Government has to indulge in sensible restructuring, but it is tinkering at the edges, playing around with band aids.

What about these bonus payments? They are a bit of a mystery, I must say. The Government has been very evasive about who is going to get the bonus payments. The Department officials have been saying that they are not quite sure how it is going to work. The Minister keeps saying on radio around the country that the Government is giving $1.2 billion. He forgets that it is $1.2 billion over six years—$200m each year. How much is that? New South Wales alone needs $1.2 billion dollars to catch up. Each year it goes $350m further down the track. The Government is giving $200m to the whole of Australia. If we divide that between six States and a couple of Territories, we finish up with something like $30m per State or Territory per year. Does the Government seriously believe that will make an impact
upon either waiting lists or the crumbling state of our public hospitals?

That is the sort of money that the New South Wales Minister Ron Phillips has rightly called a pittance. But it is worse than that, because the chances are that the States are not going to get it. A bonus payment is linked to treating a certain percentage of public patients. As the Minister knows, his own State is already paying a penalty because it does not treat many public patients; it treats, as he says, too many private patients. It is not going to get it. So Victoria will not get it. Indeed, the two major States, New South Wales and Victoria, probably will not get it either; neither of the two States will get it.

Something like $600m of private health funds that currently go into public hospitals is at risk because these patients are not going to go there. So what has the Government got? It has its little minions wandering around the country, going to the individual States saying, 'Look, you accept our rule and our Medicare agreement'; and what will happen? They then say, 'Well, if you sign this, we will actually give you a bit more money'. Nod, nod; wink, wink; nudge, nudge. ‘We will give you a bit more money and everything will be all right.’ The plan is: divide and rule.

So it is not surprising that the States are revolting. They are saying to the Minister, 'We are going to stand together; we are not going to stand for this nonsense; we are not going to be bought off; the money is not enough'. Virtually every State in the Commonwealth is saying, 'The money you are offering is not enough; what we need is sensible restructuring'. I will tell the Minister how he should restructure it later.

But let us look at how the Government is going to raise some of the money. Let us look at the levy and how the Government is going to pay for all this. Let us ignore the rest of the Bankcard Budget. The Government is increasing the levy and bringing in $300m. That is a very interesting amount. I do not know whether the Minister remembers—if he does not, we certainly do—that a thing called a co-payment was introduced last year. I know this is embarrassing to him. It is the most humiliating thing that has ever happened to a Minister in this place. But how much did that co-payment bring in? It was $300m. Is that not a coincidence? Well, fancy that! So, because he could not get his co-payment, because he was comprehensively rolled to get Keating into the prime ministership, we have to pay an increase in the Medicare levy.

But what about the Minister’s own figures in relation to the Medicare levy? Let me just quote him. This is the Minister, almost a year ago to the day, saying:

'It would be equitable to increase the compulsory contributions of working people to finance unnecessary services.'

That is talking about the Medicare levy. The Minister continues:

'The money you are offering is not enough; what we need is sensible restructuring'. I will tell the Minister how he should restructure it later.

That is exactly what he said.

I now move on to address some of the lies that have been taken around by members of the Labor Party. They have been saying that a Federal coalition is going to take $1.2 billion out of public hospitals. I am not allowed the use the word 'lie', but let me say that it is a gross misrepresentation of the truth. The Minister knows absolutely truly that hospitals get their funding from two sources: direct Government funds and indirect private patients. He knows full well that what will happen under our policy is that they will actually get increased funding because they will get an increase in funding from their private patients because of the increased number of patients taking out private insurance.

On the one hand, yesterday on Tasmanian radio the Minister was saying that we were taking money out of the system; yesterday in Question Time he was saying that we were spending too much money on the system. He
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has to have some consistency. He has to have at least a pretence of consistency. He cannot have it both ways. Clearly, what he is doing is wandering around the country trying to scare the patients out of their minds.

The Prime Minister (Mr Keating) was up here scaremongering, clearly indicating that he was not fit to be a Prime Minister. Never mind that on the ABC the other day he said that we were going to abolish Medicare. That is another complete deceit—absolutely inaccurate. We are not going to abolish Medicare. We have retained the main principles of Medicare and, indeed, we will improve it. According to the Minister, we will allow doctors to charge an AMA schedule. But, hang on a minute, what happens now? Are they allowed to charge an AMA schedule now?

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The Minister for Aged, Family and Health Services (Mr Staples) knows the answer. Come on, Peter! Yes, of course they are. Are you trying to pretend that because there will be an AMA schedule under us as well as under you that ours is going to be adopted and yours is not because we are going to allow insurance. Your policy about gap insurance is that you make people pay $600m out of their own pockets—

Mr Howe—Mr Deputy Speaker, on a point of order: I think it would be helpful to the House if the honourable member for Lowe addressed his remarks through you.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER—Yes. The Minister is quite correct.

Dr BOB WOODS—I am very happy to do that.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER—I should also say that Ministers should not provoke the honourable member for Lowe into a direct interchange over the table. So the honourable member for Lowe will continue his remarks through the Chair.

Dr BOB WOODS—Well, what are the solutions to all this? We will get past the distortions. The solutions, according to almost every authority known to mankind, including all the State Ministers, is to increase the number of privately insured patients. They all say, 'Let's give incentives to take out private health insurance; let's give tax deductions or tax rebates'. The Minister for Health in Western Australia is saying it; the Ministers for Health in the majority of the States are saying it. Neil Batt, a former Federal President of the Labor Party is saying it. Everybody who has any authority at all is saying, 'Let's increase the number of privately insured people. You will get them out of the public system; you will put more money into the system overall; and you will not have to increase the Medicare levy'. There is no doubt that that is what we need to do. We need to improve the system by relieving the pressure by getting more people privately insured. We will do that by giving pensioners up to $800 per couple to take out private health insurance—a sizeable chunk of the cost of private health insurance.

There is a separate agenda proposed here, of course, by the honourable member for Canning (Mr Gear), who is, I might add, the only other member in the chamber on the Government's side; he is the Minister's kite flier for the nationalisation program. The Minister is trying to centralise control over the hospitals and the doctors. His predecessor says he does not need to nationalise doctors; he just needs to nationalise the hospitals. So that is what he is doing. There will be a single, monolithic, government-run insurer; private insurance will be abolished; the hospitals will then depend upon the Government for their income; they will have to do as the Government says. There will no longer be private hospitals; there will no longer be private health funds; there will no longer be choice; there will be a centralised control. That is what the Government's left wing ideologue wants; that is what its left wing ideology requests: more control, more centralisation, more nationalisation. That is what the Minister is doing indirectly by nationalising the hospitals.

At least the honourable member for Canning has the guts and the honesty to stand up and say that, whereas the Minister willows around, pretending that he is not trying to centralise control. The Minister should be hiding his head in shame. He is presiding over the decline of what used to be a very
good and sound health system into a system which, it is universally agreed by every responsible authority, is in complete disarray, is a complete debacle and a complete nonsense. He should be ashamed of himself.

Mr Howe (Batman—Minister for Health, Housing and Community Services) (4.16 p.m.)—I will deal very quickly with two or three of the main points that were raised by the honourable member for Lowe (Dr Bob Woods). Firstly, with respect to the issue of crisis, I visited something like 30 hospitals across Australia and I do not know of a chief executive officer in Australia who wanted to argue that position with me. Secondly, with the waiting lists issue, as the honourable member for Lowe himself acknowledged the matter of estimates is problematic. Waiting lists mean different things in different States. Frankly, there is no substance to what the honourable member for Lowe had to say. The honourable member for Lowe mentioned capital. The Commonwealth has said that it will assist the States in the development of metropolitan plans or capital plans. I would have thought—

Dr Bob Woods—$20m.

Mr Howe—No; over $100m over the five years.

Mr Deputy Speaker—Order! The honourable member for Lowe has spoken and should not interject.

Mr Howe—I would have thought that was a very substantial contribution. In terms of whether New South Wales or Victoria would receive any benefit from the bonus proposition, let me quote from the statement that the honourable member for Lowe obviously has not read. It states:

The new arrangements will recognise differences between the States and Territories in the level of public provision and give all States and Territories an incentive to improve public provision. It removes the incentive States now may have to give priority to patients with private insurance. The impact of the new arrangements is in the hands of the States and Territories. All will gain initially through a combination of the bonus and incentives arrangements and anticipated changes to the way General Revenue Assistance Grants are distributed. Those States and Territories that increase public provision the most will gain the most.

The Government includes in this Budget the most comprehensive structural changes in health care in Australia’s history. The key to that reform is a guarantee of access to public hospitals on the basis of clinical need, not insurance status or ability to pay. No longer will private patients in public hospitals get preference over public patients in equal need of treatment. Access, efficiency and quality are the key themes linking the health reforms together.

To ensure better and fairer access to public hospitals we will provide an additional $1.59 billion over six years. This will be used to end discrimination against public patients; restructure Federal-State financial arrangements; establish a Medicare patient charter, explain patient’s rights and entitlements; and establish an effective complaint mechanism for patients. In particular, $70m has been allocated over the next two years to significantly reduce waiting lists for surgery. All these measures will make Medicare even stronger.

The Budget also marks significant investment in ensuring that public hospitals in this country deliver services efficiently. Two years ago this Government set up the national health strategy to look at ways of making our health system more efficient and effective. Issues paper No. 2 of the strategy on hospitals detailed a raft of core reforms required to meet the needs of Australians into the next century.

Issues paper No. 2 was the subject of extensive consultation with hospital administrators throughout the country. The core reforms involved in issues paper No. 2 were solidly supported by not only the administrators but, essentially, each health Minister in the country. This Budget marks a commitment to implementing these core reforms. We will continue the development of the case mix program so that Australia has a system whereby hospitals are funded on the basis of what they actually do and not on their historical entitlement.

Over the next six years we will commit $118m to hospital capital, but only on the basis of States developing coherent capital plans for their hospital systems. We will fund
the piloting of area health management models to demonstrate how population based planning and funding can lead to improved continuity of care and to show how the needs of local communities can be more effectively met. We will fund demonstration projects to investigate ways of devolving budgets within hospitals to clinical units in order to support a more cost-effective use of resources.

This Budget package provides funding for increasing the number of people being treated in our public hospitals. It also provides a substantial investment in structural reform of the way in which public hospitals deliver services. This is not a package cobbled together overnight. It is an integrated strategy which is the culmination of an unprecedented process of research, analysis and consultation within the entire health sector.

In recent weeks I have had the opportunity to consult many people about what is involved in the comprehensive program of reform that we have put in place in this Budget. I can say without fear of contradiction that the broad thrust of what the Government is proposing has massive support across the Australian community. People do not think of health as being in some state of crisis, as the Opposition spokesperson would like to invent. There is no such situation. There is a need for structural reform, but in the package that we announced on Budget night there was outlined a range of measures that amounted to the most comprehensive set of structural reforms ever introduced in the Australian health system.

We do not have a hint of what the Opposition is committed to in terms of structural reform. All Opposition members are capable of is reasserting, again and again, that somehow things must be done privately rather than publicly. Their approach to health in this country is essentially a private sector approach. It is not a balanced approach between the public and private sectors. It is not an approach that would seek to focus on making the best use of the resources available. Rather, it is an approach that we have seen in the biases of our coalition opponents over many years. Again and again, they have come into this Parliament and suggested that what we need to do is subsidise the private sector. Essentially, the Opposition's policy is to put about $800m into tax subsidies, $500m into the reinsurance pool, and to spend not a red cent on the public hospital sector in this country.

The health strategy in the Budget has been endorsed by a wide range of groups: the Australian Hospitals Association, representing 650 public and private hospitals around the country, the Doctors Reform Society, the Consumer Health Forum—

*Dr Woods interjecting—*

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Ronald Edwards)—** I warn the honourable member for Lowe.

**Mr HOWE—** the Public Health Association and the Brotherhood of St Laurence. Even the private hospitals sector has welcomed the package, according to this report in the *Australian Financial Review* this morning:

Operators in the private health sector generally welcomed the Government’s health reforms announced in the Budget... Mr David Say, the managing director of James Hardie Industries, which owns 50 per cent of Health Care Corporation—operating seven hospitals and nursing homes in New South Wales—described the reforms as “positive” and said “They will certainly help us”.

Against what we see from the Government—that is, solid planning and development of the Australian hospital system, a recognition of the need for funding which gets incentives right in that system and which is directed towards efficiency and structural reforms—we have what could only be described as the Opposition’s big health gamble.

The Opposition’s funding of public hospitals over the next six years is $8m less than the Government’s. It would slash $1.3 billion from annual funding of public hospitals; that is $6.5 billion less over the next five years of the Medicare agreement. We will invest an extra $1.6 billion over the next six years. Our funding of public hospitals is $8m greater over this period.
Opposition members are somewhat confused about how much they actually would slash from public hospitals. Before the last election, they did not even have a health policy. This time they appear to have something worse. The annual cut of $1.3 billion is based on a conservative estimate of the bed day rate they would use to claw back funding of public hospitals.

The central element of the Fightback package is to increase the number of private patients in public hospitals and to cut from the government grants to public hospitals the additional money the public hospitals receive from these private patients. A crucial issue in determining how that policy would work is how much a private patient would be required to pay for each day in hospital and, therefore, how much would be cut from the public funding for those public hospitals.

In the Department of Finance's analysis of Fightback, it used a bed day rate of $180 a day with a clawback rate for every bed day occupied by a private patient in a public hospital. This amounts to an annual cut of $1.3 billion. In response to this analysis, the shadow Treasurer, the honourable member for Flinders (Mr Reith), said, ‘No, the actual rate used to determine the cuts was $350 a bed day’. If we take the man at his word—and who would not?—that amounts to an annual cut of $2.5 billion, translated into $14 billion over the next six years. So the Opposition policy also threatens to blow out Australia's health spending by $2.1 billion a year.

Under Medicare this Government has presided over the most stable period of health costs in Australia's history. Health spending has been maintained at around 8 per cent of GDP.

Dr Bob Woods—Mr Deputy Speaker, I raise a point of order. It is tradition in this place that speeches are not read; they are delivered, unless they are maiden speeches. I think the Minister is well beyond his maiden speech. Surely you should direct him not to read his speech.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Les Scott)—The Minister is obviously using notes. There is no point of order.

Mr HOWE—The stability would be destroyed and we would be led down the United States road, where health spending is heading towards 14 per cent of GDP and health services are denied to almost 40 million Americans who cannot afford private insurance. Who would travel down this path when we have a simple, stable and affordable system in Medicare?

In this country we have an extraordinarily clear choice in terms of health policy. We have a government which has established a universal and equitable health insurance system—a system in which people have certainty in their access to primary health care and to general practitioners. They have a certainty that the public hospital system will remain one of the finest in the world, will continue to be supported by governments and that governments will seek to deal with the structural changes and the efficiencies that are necessary to cope with a 29 per cent increase in public hospital patients expected during the 1990s.

Rather than denigrate the hospital system and regret its problems, we can celebrate that that hospital system has coped with an almost 30 per cent increase in the number of inpatients in the 1980s. It has reduced substantially the length of stays and increased the throughput of that hospital system. It has improved the quality of care and maintained, internationally, some of the best technology in the world. It increasingly has recognised the links between tertiary and primary health care.

The Prime Minister (Mr Keating) referred to the links between health and aged care. Those links will be even more important as we see the population age during the 1990s and into the early part of the next century. That is all the more reason why, as we have done in relation to the Budget statements, we have made much more explicit the links between health and aged care and the links between tertiary and primary care.

The Government has nothing to apologise for in its approach to health: it recognises that we need a continuing process of reform; it sees the issues of access, efficiency and quality as central issues; and it recognises that
there is a need to focus particularly on the issue of waiting lists in the short term. We have provided an additional $70m to tackle that issue. In the longer term we recognise that we cannot deal with that issue without national information, so the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare will for the first time collect national data in relation to the waiting lists.

The Government also recognises that we need to improve the process of admission. We need to use the beds that are available on a regional basis and link up those beds in a systematic way. We need to make proper use of the private sector wherever the possibility exists. We need to use more by way of day surgery and we need to expand the opportunity for day surgery.

We can achieve more by way of efficiency, and those efficiencies can help in relation to this problem. But what we are about is substance in terms of policy, not a kind of empty rhetoric. It is extraordinary that, on an issue which is so important, the Opposition spokesperson should be so ill-prepared for a debate that was brought on by those opposite and not by the Government. The opportunity was there but, frankly, the honourable member for Lowe was simply not up to it. As everyone knows, his views in terms of health policy are, to say the least, ill-developed. That was reflected in the debate today. (Time expired)

Mr NEHL (Cowper) (4.31 p.m.)—I take great pleasure in supporting the honourable member for Lowe (Dr Bob Woods) in this matter of public importance. I listened to the Minister for Health, Housing and Community Services (Mr Howe) with interest when he said that the measures the Government has introduced would make Medicare even stronger. That emphasises the fact that Medicare is in an absolute crisis—it is dying. Measures are needed to make Medicare function more effectively for the betterment of the Australian people. I look forward to the present Opposition getting into government so we can get the health care system of Australia back where it should be. This health system has had 10 years of neglect.

I note too that the honourable member for Lowe made mention of the hospital waiting lists for surgery. He suggested that the figures were between 80,000 and 100,000. The Minister said that there is no substance in what the honourable member for Lowe has said. I would like to ask whether the Minister can deny that the number on the waiting list is between 80,000 and 100,000. If he does, what are the real waiting list figures? Let him give us the figures. Or perhaps the next speaker from the Government side in this debate can come up with an accurate figure.

Private hospitals are half empty, with 55 to 60 per cent occupancy, and in some rural areas hospitals are closed. Hospital costs went up 12 per cent last year. In the last 10 years hospital costs have increased by 163 per cent. Yet, at the same time, Commonwealth funding as a percentage is down. For example, in New South Wales in 1991-92 the Commonwealth provided 34.06 per cent of health expenditure and the State Government provided 65.94 per cent. The Commonwealth figure is down from 38 per cent in 1984-85 to 34 per cent this year.

Australia spends $1,796 per person on health care. That makes a total of $30 billion, which is a massive expenditure. It is an expenditure that must be controlled in order to provide the best possible health service. In this Budget, the total annual cost of Medicare itself is $5.62 billion. The total cost of Government health care, including Medicare, is $14.7 billion.

Where does the money come from? Last year the Medicare levy raised $2.385 billion. This year it is up by $120m. Of course, with the new increase in the levy, it will increase by another $300m from 1 July 1993. It is interesting to note that the private health funds consistently raise more money for health than Medicare. Last year the health funds raised $3.4 billion.

The Medicare levy raises only 8 per cent of the total funding for health care in Australia. Since the start of Medicare the levy is now up 40 per cent, and it still goes nowhere near meeting the costs of health care. On 29 August 1991 the Minister said that the levy would have to go up to 1.53 per cent to equal
the co-payment scheme that he wanted to bring in. Do honourable members remember the co-payment scheme? That is when the Minister was rolled. That co-payment was going to save $1.64 billion in four years: $164m in the first year; $306m in the second; $480m in the third; and $695m in the fourth. Of course, the extra Medicare levy in the Budget is going to bring in $300m. But I am willing to bet that that increase in the Medicare levy is not the end of the road; it is not the last increase we will see.

Last year when the Minister was trying to introduce the co-payment he said that we needed a price signal to reduce over-servicing. It is very interesting that even in the People's Republic of China a percentage fee for medical treatment is now being charged just to reduce over-servicing and to bring it back into hand. It is as plain as the nose on your face, Mr Deputy Speaker, that if we continue with more hard Labor after the next election there will be more Medicare levy increases. They are inevitable.

When the Minister was asked on ABC radio to comment on possible further increases, he hedged. He backed away and said, 'It wouldn't be very useful to make any comment about that'. We all know that, if those opposite stay in government, the Medicare levy will increase very often indeed. The States have been hit very hard since Medicare came in, and the public hospitals are in crisis.

The Minister said he visited quite a number of hospitals. I think he must have been there with his eyes closed or with blinkers on, because in my part of the world the public hospitals are in crisis. They need rebuilding. They need dramatic injections of funds. The State governments cannot possibly provide that money because they have been handicapped in funding by the Federal Government.

Public hospital expenditure as a proportion of total expenditure is down from 34.6 per cent in 1982-83 to 29.67 per cent in 1988-89. The States' share of public hospital expenditure has gone from 43 per cent in 1982-83 up to 48 per cent in 1989-90. This is typical of the pattern whereby this present Commonwealth Government is continually increasing the cost burden on the States and the hospital queues lurch on, with up to 100,000 people on the waiting list. Let me use the figures for New South Wales as an example. In 1990 there were 23,196 people booked in. Last year that increased by 4.3 per cent and, worse, the waiting times have increased. The number of people waiting six months or more for a knee replacement or a hip replacement has gone up by 10.5 per cent. We casually and quickly say 'knee replacement' and 'hip replacement', but we are talking about people. We are talking about pain and we are talking about suffering.

The people on the Government side of the House have the hide to come in and put themselves forward as the caring, compassionate government, but all they do is give us words because their actions deny what they say. Their actions give that care and so-called compassion the absolute lie. Those opposite are good on the words but they are not good on the action.

We know that this Government will blame the States, but it is to blame. Some time ago Minister Howe suggested that capital expenditure should be around 8 per cent of recurrent hospital expenditure. Capital expenditure is now around 3 per cent, and there is no way that any of the States can look after their public hospitals without additional funding from the Commonwealth. The way in which the Government is trying to kill off the private health system will bring an increasing number of patients into the public system. The true cost of replacement of Australia's public hospital stock has been estimated at $700m annually. What has the Government done? It has provided the miserly sum of $3m for planning in the 1992-93 Budget, and the promise of $23.1m a year over the next five years. That is quite crazy.

It is also very interesting to note in the current economic situation that in Budget week the accord with the ACTU has promised a $10 per week pay rise to low income earners. Of course, now we all know when the election will be: it will be the last week of February or the first week of March because all of the goodies come in before then and the tax rises do not start until 1 April. That $10 per week makes those low
income earners eligible to pay the Medicare levy. A family presently earning $24,270 and not paying any levy will be paying a $104 Medicare levy per year once it gets its $10 per week from the Government and the unions.

Under the Government the tax rate is 38 per cent. It is much less under Fightback. We will bring it down to 30 per cent. So that $10 per week has a tax of 38 per cent which brings it down to $6.20. It will take nearly 17 weeks of the pay rise to get rid of the extra $104 Medicare levy.

The whole Medicare system is in crisis. We need a change of government and a change of policy. We in the coalition say that we will not encourage the wealthy to use Medicare in competition with the poor. The public system should be there to look after the people who are in greatest need. Those who can afford it should pay. That is the basis of our policy: to look after the poor and make the wealthy pay their own way. (Time expired)

Mr GEAR (Canning) (4.41 p.m.)—There is nothing that excites the passions of the Liberal and National parties and the Government like the health debate and also, I suppose, industrial relations. The arguments which have been put forward today by the previous speaker, the honourable member for Cowper (Mr Nehl), and the Opposition health spokesman, the honourable member for Lowe (Dr Bob Woods), are hollow. They are old arguments; we have heard them year in and year out.

We are not talking about the public system or the private system here. Basically, we are talking about health insurance. In this country we have always been handicapped because we have grown up with private insurance. Past governments have never accepted their responsibilities; they washed their hands of any responsibility for running a decent health system and a decent health insurance system. Now that Medicare has come in and we have seen the impact that it has had on the private health insurance system allowing people to at least have a choice, the Opposition wants to go back to the old days. It wants to turn back the clocks and push everyone back into private health insurance.

One fact may have escaped the Opposition's attention, although the shadow spokesman talked about it. He talked about the fact that the number of people who are taking out private health insurance is falling. The Government does not force people out of private health insurance. We do not say to them, 'You shouldn't be in there'. We do not force them out; they are getting out of their own accord. People are making up their own minds and are choosing to leave private health insurance.

So that those opposite understand why people are getting out of private health insurance, I will quote from a couple of letters which people from my electorate have written to me explaining why they have got out. Maybe the major defect of private health insurance will sink into the small minds of those opposite. I will give just a few examples. I have a letter written by one of my constituents to a doctor. It says:

Please find enclosed the remittances for the operation recently undertaken by my daughter. I am writing this covering note to protest about the excessively large gap between the scheduled fee and the fee that you charged.

The letter continues:

... as a consumer I protest at both my wife and myself paying the Medicare Levy, having paid for the top hospital cover in HBF, and still being stuck with such a large bill for what was only part of a simple, routine operation.

That might start those opposite thinking about what is wrong with private health insurance. Another constituent wrote to me complaining about a $675 charge above the Medicare schedule fee which came out of his own pocket. I have another letter to the Australian Medical Association which was forwarded to me.

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However, the anaesthetist—his name is given, but I will not read it out—... bill was approximately 50% above the scheduled fee,

The same letter to the Australian Medical Association continues:

When one pays for private health insurance, one certainly does not expect to have to make such a huge contribution after the Medicare and H.B.F. payments.
Is it starting to sink in about the deficiencies of private health insurance? If it is not, I have another letter from a female constituent. Her husband had prostate cancer and underwent an operation on 28 November. The charges included a charge of $726 above the schedule fee by the specialist, $658.95 above the schedule fee for radiotherapy, and a number of other charges adding up to $2,700 which my constituents paid out of their own pocket after paying Medicare and private health insurance. If any of those people had been Medicare patients and received the same treatment it would have cost them nothing.

Dr Bob Woods—Mr Deputy Speaker, I raise a point of order. The honourable member for Canning is making out a wonderful case for gap insurance, but I remind him that he is supposed to be opposing this matter of public importance. Perhaps you would like to point out that he is supposed to be opposing it. He is supporting the coalition policy.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Les Scott)—Order! There is no point of order.

Mr GEAR—What a weak old point of order! It shows that I have touched a nerve. If these people had been Medicare patients it would not have cost them anything. Do those opposite think the people in the street are mugs? Do they honestly think that, after paying about $1,500 in private health insurance, when people have an operation such as my constituents have had and come away with, in this case, a bill of $2,700 to pay out of their own pockets they will say, ‘Isn’t this private health insurance a wonderful thing’? That is the policy that those opposite are offering the people because they will force people back into private health insurance.

I have to say that private health insurance does have one advantage and I will name it. The one advantage of private health insurance is that people can have access to medical care straight away. If a person has private health insurance he or she can go straight into the hospital. But if a person is a Medicare patient he or she can rot as far as the surgeons of this world are concerned.

Mr Deputy Speaker, you would know that the people who control access to medical services in this country are not the bureaucrats or politicians; it is the medical profession which controls access. It does this ruthlessly and it forces people back into private health insurance. Many of my constituents tell me that their surgeons ask, ‘Are you in private health insurance?’, and if the answer is no they say, ‘Well, get into it fast and I’ll do your operation’. That is what is happening in the real world and that is why the private health insurance system on which the Opposition bases its policy is fundamentally flawed.

In his speech today the Minister for Health, Housing and Community Services (Mr Howe) indicated to the House what we are doing about the waiting lists. One thing we are doing is improving access. We are diminishing the powers that the surgeons have to put people on a waiting list—the sorts of people that the honourable member talked about just a few minutes ago. What has been the reaction from Dr Shepherd? He has said, ‘We won’t operate’. If one tries to put a public patient into a private hospital the surgeons will not operate. How is that for compassion?

The simple fact is that the Opposition is trying to turn back the clock. It is trying to push everyone back into private health insurance when Australians are making up their minds about it and getting out. They are choosing to get out; they are choosing to be Medicare-only patients. Since we brought in Medicare the number of people who are privately insured has dropped from 60 per cent to 40 per cent and the shadow Minister said that it will drop to 30 per cent. I can tell honourable members why people are doing this because I listen to what people say. In the community they are absolutely fed up with paying three times, and I cannot say that I blame them.

One advantage of Medicare is that people pay once. The consumers are making up their own minds. The honourable member can shake his head and take silly points of order, but in the end, if he looks at it objectively and if he looks at all of the evidence that has been presented to us about the number of people who are getting out of private health insurance and choosing to be Medicare...
patients, he will be drawn irresistibly to the fact that most people favour Medicare over private health insurance.

Nothing we have done in this Budget stops people taking out private health insurance. I am not surprised that more and more people are getting out and choosing not to take it out. The recent Medibank Private scheme whereby holes are cut in the safety net and every hole that is cut makes it cheaper has been a miserable failure. That was a last ditch effort by the private health insurance industry to hold people in it. But it has failed and more and more people are dropping out of private health insurance.

Let us look at the impact of the Opposition’s policy on the community. By using carrots and sticks it will push people back into private health insurance. The Department of Health, Housing and Community Services has read the Opposition’s document and has analysed it. I will tell the Opposition how much it will raise from this policy. It will raise $2,113m extra from going to private health insurance—that is, $2.1 billion. Where will this money go? Of that, $1,591m will go straight to the doctors. Is it any wonder that when Dr Hewson went to the AMA convention they said, ‘Music to our ears’? The Opposition is going to collect $2,100m and give $1,600m straight to the doctors.

Do honourable members know how much will go to the hospitals to shorten the waiting lists—$200m. That is $1 in $10—less than will be consumed by the administrative costs of running all of these inefficient private health insurance organisations. Out of all the money the Opposition collects, $274m will be consumed to prop up the inefficient private health insurance industry. As I have said before, it is no wonder that more people are getting out of it. It stings them in the pocket every time they use it.

I honestly believe that the Government, in its Budget this year, has addressed the problem of access. We have a few more problems to address, and of course we will do that. But we will not go back to the bad old days of private health insurance where the rich got the best and the poor got what was left. That is not our policy; it is the Opposition’s policy. Private health insurance costs the same whether one is a pensioner or a millionaire. When one looks at private health insurance one sees how inefficient it is. It needs the community rating principle to prop it up and it needs reinsurance pools. People are even talking about giving a tax deduction. What good would that be to pensioners who do not pay any tax?

The Government, with its Medicare scheme, has the policy; it has a natural product. It does not need all those props, struts and tax deductions to keep it going. We know that, as time goes on, more and more Australians will choose Medicare. I look forward, as a back bench member of this Government, to going to the next election with our policy and comparing it with the Opposition’s policy. The people of Australia have looked at the Opposition’s policy on private health insurance and they have made up their mind. When those opposite try to ram the policy down people’s throats at the next election they will tell them where to go.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER—Order! The debate is concluded.

BILLS RETURNED FROM THE SENATE

The following Bill was returned from the Senate without requests:

Sugar Cane Levy Amendment Bill 1992

COMMITTEES

Joint Select Committee on Certain Aspects of the Operation and Interpretation of the Family Law Act

Report

Message received from the Senate acquainting the House that it concurs with the resolution transmitted to the Senate relating to an amendment to paragraph (16) of the resolution of the appointment of the Joint Select Committee on Certain Aspects of the Operation and Interpretation of the Family Law Act.
SOCIAL SECURITY AMENDMENT BILL 1992

First Reading

Bill presented by Mr Simmons, for Dr Blewett, and read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr SIMMONS (Calare—Minister for Family Support and Minister for Local Government) (4.52 p.m.)—

I move:

That the Bill be now read a second time.

The Social Security Amendment Bill 1992 gives effect to changes in the area of education leavers waiting periods. This Bill modifies the education leavers waiting period provisions in the Social Security Act 1991 applicable to education leavers who claim Job Search allowance or sickness allowance. These waiting periods are required to be served before a person can become eligible for those payments from the Department of Social Security.

There has been some concern that young people leaving school must normally serve a 13-week waiting period—or six weeks if they are over 21, are partnered or have a dependent child—from the date of claiming income support, the day after they cease studies or the date of registration with the CES, depending on the date of claim. Some ex-students might be disadvantaged if they fail to claim income support as soon as they should, perhaps because they are unaware of available assistance or because they are unsure of their future education plans.

The amendments in the Bill will ensure that people claiming Job Search allowance or sickness allowance who have recently left secondary education will be eligible for payment 13 or six weeks—whichever period is applicable to the person—from the date of leaving education or from 15 February in the following year, whichever is the earlier.

It is considered that the current education leavers waiting period provisions should also be modified in relation to people who undertake longer term education. Under current arrangements, those who undertake courses of six months or longer face a waiting period if they need to return to DSS income support at the end of the course. The second amendment proposed will waive the waiting period for those who return to income support within 12 months of leaving it. The Government is anxious to encourage young people, particularly secondary school students, to remain in education. This initiative is consistent with that objective.

Under current arrangements, those subject to the waiting period can have only full time employment taken into account in the assessment of a reduction in the waiting period. For each full time week of work, the waiting period is reduced by a week. It is recognised that young people have reduced opportunities for full time work especially under current economic conditions. The third element of this package of measures addresses this problem by reducing the waiting period for periods of paid part time and/or casual work. If the amount of part time and/or casual work amounts to 35 hours—regarded as one week's full time work—the employment will be taken into account in reducing the waiting period by one week. If more than 35 hours is worked, a further pro-rata reduction in the waiting period will be allowed. If the amount of part time and casual work amounts to less than 35 hours the waiting period will not be reduced. It is considered that this initiative will remove any perceived disincentives and encourage young school leavers to test their work force potential by taking up casual and part time opportunities.

The last element of the waiting period measures affects hardship cases. At present special benefit may be paid in a deferment period to young people in hardship. This involves, among other things, an application and grant for special benefit and a subsequent transfer to another payment at the end of the waiting period. The amendment in this Bill would effectively waive the waiting period in such cases. If the young person qualified for special benefit in what would otherwise be a waiting period, the waiting period would not apply and the primary allowance would be paid.

These education leavers waiting period measures will come into effect on 2 Novem-
ber 1992. I commend the Bill to the House and present the explanatory memorandum.

Debate (on motion by Dr Bob Woods) adjourned.

DEVELOPMENT ALLOWANCE AUTHORITY AMENDMENT BILL 1992

First Reading

Bill presented by Mr Brereton, and read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr BRERETON (Kingsford-Smith—Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister) (4.57 p.m.)—I move:

That the Bill be now read a second time.

The Development Allowance Authority Amendment Bill amends the Development Allowance Authority Act 1992—the principal Act. The primary purpose of the Bill is to amend the principal Act to increase the flexibility of the legislation so that a more consistent approach is available to the various types of prospective applicant for the development allowance.

Where all other criteria in the principal Act are met, these amendments would allow, firstly, applicants to elect to aggregate projects consisting of the establishment of new productive facilities with other projects consisting of the expansion, improvement or upgrading of existing productive facilities where the new and existing productive facilities are vertically integrated. Secondly, the amendments would allow a project to qualify where the project involves both leased and purchased assets and either or both enable the project to meet the $50m qualifying threshold. Thirdly, the amendments permit a lessor to obtain the development allowance in respect of plant which is subject to a long term lease and has been certified for pre-qualification by the DAA on application by the lessee, even if only part of the plant covered by the relevant project is leased. These amendments provide additional flexibility for claiming the development allowance benefit and, in particular, in passing the $50m threshold. The opportunity is also taken to make minor adjustments to the drafting of certain provisions in the principal Act to facilitate interpretation by applicants for the allowance, and to make some minor administrative adjustments.

I now turn to a more detailed discussion of these amendments.

Project Definition

This Bill expands the concepts of project schemes in the principal Act to allow the aggregation of new productive facilities with the expansion, improvement or upgrading of existing productive facilities. This is achieved by introducing two new types of scheme, an 'individual project scheme' and a 'joint venture project scheme'. These schemes allow projects involving new productive facilities to be added to projects involving, for example, the expansion of existing productive facilities to qualify overall for the development allowance and, in particular, to meet the $50m threshold test. Projects in such schemes must meet the vertical integration test.

Leased Plant

While the principal Act provides for leased plant to be eligible for the development allowance, it does not permit a combination of purchased and leased assets used in a project to be aggregated for the purpose of meeting the $50m threshold test. The Bill expands the definitions of plant expenditure and gross capital expenditure to give applicants more flexibility in structuring their projects.

This Bill also introduces a mechanism by which a lessor can claim the development allowance benefit by way of a pre-qualifying certificate that has been issued by the DAA to the lessee.

Consequential Adjustments

As a result of the amendments involving single entity project schemes, joint venture project schemes, and projects involving a mixture of acquired and leased assets, a number of consequential changes to other parts of the Act have been necessary, in particular to the competitiveness test and the $50m threshold test. In addition, consequent upon the amendments allowing a mixture of purchased and leased plant, this Bill permits proposals to incur plant expenditure to count
even if the entity has not decided at the relevant time whether to acquire, construct or lease the plant.

The Vertical Integration Test

The vertical integration test for company group project schemes contained in subsection 14(2) of the principal Act has been simplified to avoid confusion. The amendment also clarifies that company group project schemes may consist of both new productive facilities and the expansion, upgrading and improvement of existing productive facilities.

‘Australia’

A definition of Australia is introduced to ensure that the original intention of having its meaning consistent with the principal Act and the Income Tax Assessment Act 1936 is achieved. This amendment will, for example, enable certain offshore oil and gas projects to qualify for the development allowance, provided, of course, that such projects meet the other tests in the principal Act.

Typographical Correction

A typographical error in paragraph 9(b) of the principal Act is corrected to clarify that this paragraph refers to ‘goods or related goods’ rather than ‘goods or related services’.

Certified Copies of Documents

There is also a minor administrative amendment to include a provision to allow the DAA to certify that a copy of a document is in fact a copy of an original document issued by the DAA and to provide that such a certified copy be recognised in courts and tribunals.

Commencement of the Amendments

The amendments which are either favourable to prospective applicants for the allowance or neutral in character are intended to apply from the date of commencement of the principal Act—other than the new provision relating to the provision of certified copies of documents, which would apply from the date of royal assent of the amending Act. The amendments do not affect the requirement that applications for the allowance be lodged by 31 December 1992.

The Treasurer (Mr Dawkins) has discussed these proposed amendments with Mr Halton, the Development Allowance Authority, who has advised that the Authority will receive applications on the assumption that these proposed amendments will become law, but decisions depending upon them will of course have to await their passage through Parliament.

I present the explanatory memorandum which contains more detailed explanations of the provisions of the Bill. I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate (on motion by Mr Bruce Scott) adjourned.

ARTS, ENVIRONMENT AND TERRITORIES LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 1992

First Reading

Bill received from the Senate and read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr BRERETON (Kingsford-Smith—Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister) (5.05 p.m.)—I move:

That the Bill be now read a second time.

The Arts, Environment and Territories Legislation Amendment Bill 1992 amends five Acts administered in the ASET portfolio. The amendment to the Australian Capital Territory (Planning and Land Management) Act 1988 will enable the National Capital Planning Authority, with the approval of the Minister for the Arts, Sport, the Environment and Territories to take over from the Department of the Management of National Land designated by the Minister as national land, which is land required for the special purpose of Canberra as the National Capital.

The amendments to the Australia Council Act 1975 will enable the Minister, rather than the Governor-General, to appoint, terminate the appointment of, and accept the resignation of, all members of the Council, including the General Manager, but excluding the chairperson. A new section will also enable the Minister to delegate to the Council the power to appoint, and to terminate the appointment of, members, but not the chairpersons of boards constituted under the Act. These
amendments will streamline the appointment process.

The amendments to the National Gallery Act 1975 change the official name of the Gallery from Australian National Gallery to National Gallery of Australia. There has, in the past, been some confusion internationally about the status of the Gallery, as it is not immediately clear that it is the national art gallery and not merely one of a number of similar galleries. The change of name is intended to enhance the international profile of the Gallery. It will also bring the Gallery into line with the other national institutions in the Parliamentary Triangle, namely the National Science and Technology Centre and the National Library, as well as the National Museum of Australia and the National Film and Sound Archive.

The amendments to the National Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act 1975 will increase the value of contracts which the Director of Parks and Wildlife may enter into, without the approval of the Minister, from $100,000 to $250,000. This is consistent with increases already approved for other statutory authorities in the ASET portfolio.

Two Acts administered by the Department are repealed: the Lemonthyme and Southern Forests (Commission of Inquiry) Act 1987 and the States Grants (Air Quality Monitoring) Act 1976. The provisions of both Acts are spent, and as there is no need or intention to revive them, it is now appropriate that they be repealed. The opportunity is taken to correct a minor typographical error in the Australian Heritage Commission Act 1975. I present the explanatory memorandum to this Bill.

Debate (on motion by Mr Bruce Scott) adjourned.

HONEY LEGISLATION (REPEAL AND AMENDMENT) BILL 1992

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 19 August, on motion by Mr Price:

That the Bill be now read a second time.

Mr COURTICE (Hinkler) (5.08 p.m.)—The Honey Legislation (Repeal and Amendment) Bill repeals the Honey Marketing Act 1988 and, as a consequence, terminates the Australian Honey Board on 31 December 1992. The Bill also abolishes the marketing component of the honey export charge. Like the Grain Legumes Levy Amendment Bill and the Oilseeds Levy Amendment Bill, which were debated last night, it is supported by both sides of the House.

The introduction of this Bill has the support of the Federal Council of Australian Apiarists Association, the Honey Packers and Marketers Association of Australia, and two industry organisations to which the Australian Honey Board is accountable. Incidentally, the Australian Honey Board also supports this Bill.

This Bill terminates the Australian Honey Board from 1 January 1993 through the repeal of the Honey Marketing Act 1988, makes provision for certain functions of the Australian Honey Board to be carried out on behalf of the honey industry by the Australian Horticultural Corporation; makes the necessary consequential amendments to the Honey Levy Act (No. 1) 1962 and the Honey Levy Act (No. 2) 1962, the Honey Export Charge Act 1973, the Australian Horticultural Corporation Act 1987 and the Primary Industries Levies and Charges Collection Act 1991; and abolishes the marketing component of the honey export charge.

The Davis Committee reported that the smaller marketing authorities, such as the Australian Honey Board, face the problem of high operating costs relative to levy income and recommended that consideration be given to merging the smaller authorities into larger umbrella organisations which would be able to provide a more efficient and cost-effective legislative and administrative infrastructure. The Australian Honey Board operates on a budget of about half a million dollars, approximately half of which is absorbed in administrative costs.

The Australian Honey Board was reconstituted under revised marketing arrangements in 1988. Since that time its functions have effectively been reduced to generic promotion based on a limited budget and the
provision of information services to industry. There was considerable discussion at the time on the merits of the continuation of the Board. Hence, the provision was made in the 1988 Act for the honey industry's marketing arrangements to be reviewed and for the Act to sunset on 11 May 1994. Consequently, I am pleased to support the Bill.

Mr WEBSTER (Macquarie) (5.10 p.m.)—As the honourable member for Hinkler (Mr Courtice) indicated, the Honey Legislation (Repeal and Amendment) Bill meets with the approval of both sides of the House. We had similar debates yesterday, and I think it is a great pity that we do not have more of them. I am sure there are plenty of honourable members on this side of the House who would be glad to have those opposite agree more often. I am sure everybody would agree that that should be the case.

This is a very interesting piece of legislation. In recent years we have debated on a number of occasions—I should say discussed because on each occasion those debates on this industry have been bipartisan—aspects of the honey levy Bills. I have spoken on all occasions because it has always been my delight to represent a good number of honey producers. When I say honey producers I mean the owners of hives that contain the bees which produce the honey. The bees are the wonder creatures who do all the work.

Mr Deputy Speaker, you probably know, as all honourable members know, that I represent a very beautiful electorate called Macquarie. That electorate has a considerable amount of magnificent bush and many beautiful gardens that provide the wherewithal, in terms of the flowers, for the bees to retrieve the honey. It is important to say that because if we did not have the flowers and the beautiful trees in our country there would be no Australian Honey Board.

I would just like to make the point that the gardens and bush areas which I represent are truly very beautiful and produce a lot of the honey that is gathered by the bees for the apiarists in the area. There are many beautiful gardens in the Blue Mountains. Those people who have the opportunity to go up there in the springtime—especially in October when the Leura garden festival is on, when the most magnificent displays that could possibly be seen anywhere in this country will be to the fore—will certainly see a great deal of activity by the bees as they collect honey for this very important industry.

The honourable member for Hinkler made the point that there is a great deal of approval and satisfaction with regard to this legislation currently before the House. The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Defence (Mr Price) in his second reading speech mentioned a number of times how pleased he was with the cooperative spirit and the constructive approach taken by members of the Honey Board in giving a fair appraisal, in their response to the Davis Committee report, of this rather small marketing board under consideration.

We know from past debates and from other discussions that we have from time to time that smaller marketing boards are really not cost effective. The total budget of the Honey Board is $500,000, which is quite small by today's standards. The honey industry is a $40m industry, which is not insignificant. However, our exports of 13,000 tonnes a year, which is 40 per cent of our production, represents only one per cent of the world's market. So we have a lot of potential for increasing the market, particularly the export market.

I feel assured as I read the explanatory memorandum, the Bill and the second reading speech and hear other discussions on this that the transfer of the Honey Board to the Australian Horticultural Corporation will not be a backwards step, but may well be a very forward move in terms of promoting this industry, which I think has a lot of potential.

In my electorate I have a number of apiarists who have bees, not for the production of honey but for the purpose of exporting them. The winters in the Northern Hemisphere, in Korea and other parts of Asia and in Europe, are quite severe. Consequently, once spring arrives there are very few bees available and active to be able to make the best use of the early blossoms that follow the cold winter season.
Within my electorate I have a number of very energetic Australian citizens of Korean origin who are now exporting bees in vast numbers to South Korea. These bees are able to be established in hives when the first blossoms appear, thus maximising the collection of honey and development of the honey industry in that nation. I would like to commend Mr Chung, who is one of the hardest working farmers and bee producers that I have ever come across. I commend him for what he does. He is really getting fully involved in a large bee export industry. He says that bees are sent over in three-pound packs—that is, almost 1½ kilograms—which consist of one queen and 50,000 bees. A large proportion of cargo space in the Korean aircraft operating between this country and Korea is taken up by the bees that he provides. I commend him for that.

Also within my electorate I have the Hawkesbury Campus of the University of Western Sydney—formerly known as the Hawkesbury Agricultural College. I hope that everybody in this House will be familiar with that very famous institution. It has played a major role in honey research for many years. Of course, its operations in this regard will be in no way affected by the legislation before us today to put into place new arrangements for the promotion of honey.

The Hawkesbury College was originally established in 1891. The centenary of the college was recently celebrated. The college has been a leading centre for bee research over the years, first as the Hawkesbury Agricultural College and, now, as the University of Western Sydney. Under the leadership of Professor Graham Swain, it continues to have an important impact on the honey export industry. I am assured as I read the second reading speech and other references to this Bill that research and development will continue and that there will be no diminution of this. Perhaps because of the bigger organisation that will now result from the Honey Board's being combined with the Horticultural Corporation we will see more funds devoted to research and development. I hope that some of that money will go to the apiary department of the Hawkesbury Campus of the University of Western Sydney.

Research into bees at that institution has been going on for 100 years. It began with 12 swarms of hybrid Italian bees over 100 years ago. That institution has been very much involved in commercial queen bee rearing. It has been quite a feature of the apiary department of the university. A considerable export industry of queen bees has also been going on for some time as a result of the work initiated at that university. It is now carried on by apiarists in the district.

The department conducts schools and seminars for beekeepers and apiarists. It has had a substantial influence over the years on bee breeding and the distribution of breeding stock throughout the world. The apiary manager, Steve Johnson, reports that each year the campus aviary puts forward for funding four or five research submissions that would ultimately benefit the industry. Unfortunately, funding limitations will always have a bearing on their approval, and that is to be regretted.

On past occasions, I have taken the opportunity to promote the honey industry from the point of view of the product itself. I think it is very relevant to this debate that we recognise that this product is a remarkable food. If we get a scientific analysis of honey itself and start to read about it, we are left in a state of considerable amazement. If we look at the way the honey is collected—the bee is involved in a most intricate and remarkable way; it is quite an astonishing insect—again we are astonished and amazed. It never ceases to amaze me that here we have an insect that is quite a superb piece of creative design.

I was reading with great interest an excellent book written by Fred Bailey called *Bee Keeping in Australia: for pleasure and profit*. It is a book which I think every honourable member in this House should get a copy of. I am sure the Parliamentary Library has a copy of it. It has some most entertaining and revealing details about the basic product that is really the centre of this legislation before us today. For example, he talks about the fact that honey is one of the purest foods available to humans. There are a great number of
varieties of honey. There are many colours. There are all sorts of aromas, different flavours, and varying densities. Some of the honey in Australia comes from over 600 varieties of eucalypt. If the honourable member for Franklin (Mr Goodluck) were here he would be interrupting me to tell me that there are many trees peculiar to Tasmania that produce very special honey in that lovely part of Australia.

I will give some of the details of how good honey is as I summarise a couple of the points made by Fred Bailey. He says that it does not need refrigeration and that, if it is kept in a sealed bottle, it will keep indefinitely. He mentions that, when it is eaten, it is easily digested and readily absorbed into the bloodstream and provides new energy, warmth and a feeling of general well-being which is brought on quickly and naturally. It tends to regulate the system without the aid of drugs or laxatives. Maybe we need to have a little jar on each of our desks here with a teaspoon—

Mr Brereton—Some more than others.

Mr Webster—Some more than others, as the Parliamentary Secretary says. Fred Bailey also mentions the fact that, even though about 80 per cent of the basic components of honey are carbohydrates, they are in the form of natural sugars and are non-fattening. Many people get the impression that they have to avoid eating honey because it is pure sugar and that it has to be avoided. So here we have it from the expert that natural sugars are non-fattening. Those people who are listening to this debate and who are on diets may care to take note of that.

Honey can be ingested directly into the bloodstream of the human body. It is said that athletes find honey to be very valuable as a training food, as the energy released by natural carbohydrates is immediately available to the body. That cannot be said of a great deal of the other foods that we eat today. I think that in this day and age, when we hear so much about drug taking amongst athletes, maybe we should be promoting, in a much more dramatic way, the need for them to have a teaspoon of honey before every race. That would be totally acceptable.

The content of natural sugars varies in different honeys, depending on the floral substance of the original nectar. Fred Bailey goes on to talk about the very complex nature of some of the sugar—the glucose, the fructose, the sucrose and the laevulose, and so on. Honourable members did not know that, I am sure. That does not mean much to us here today, but it reveals a little of just how complex this marvellous food is. Bear in mind that it is very relevant to this debate because it is the central issue of the product that we are concerned about in the change of the Australian Honey Board to the Australian Horticultural Corporation.

Fred Bailey says that honey contains a significant number of minerals and that the lightness or the darkness of the honey often indicates the degree of minerals in the honey that are beneficial to human beings; the darker the honey the more minerals it contains. Some people shy off dark honey because they believe it has impurities in it. In fact, they are naturally produced and easily assimilated minerals. Some of the minerals found in honey that he mentions are iron, calcium, copper, sodium, manganese, potassium, magnesium, nickel, silicon, phosphorous, cobalt, aluminium and chromium. Many honourable members here today will be very surprised to realise just how many minerals are in this wonderful food. All this is gathered by that small insect that we see buzzing around in our gardens and do not take too much notice of.

Mr Bailey further says that honey contains amino acids. In some varieties, as many as 17 different amino acids have been detected. It contains vitamins B1, B2, B6 and C in varying quantities, depending on the degree of ripening of the honey within the hive. I agree with him wholeheartedly with regard to the whole operation of the honey industry, and how we can feel quite proud of the marvellous industry that has produced honeys that we, for example, see at the Royal Easter Show. Some of the great attractions at the Show are the displays by the various agricultural districts, and honey is always a feature of those displays. We are told that the honeys that are produced in this country, and on
display at the shows, are rated amongst the best in the world.

There are one or two other things that I want to say about this magnificent product. For example, it is aseptic and bactericidal. Tests carried out by bacteriologists prove that organisms and germs which affect the human body cannot live in honey because it withdraws the moisture necessary for the survival of the bacteria. It is very easy to have a debate about this product in this House. We can talk glibly about changing from one board to another, but we miss the whole wonder of an amazing food that has been provided for us and that is readily available on the shelves of our supermarkets.

I support this legislation and at the same time warmly recommend to the Australian people, to honourable members of this House, including you, Mr Deputy Speaker, the need to eat more honey and to take to heart the words that have been expressed so eloquently by Mr Fred Bailey in his book *Bee Keeping in Australia: for pleasure and profit*.

Mr Reid (Bendigo) (5.28 p.m.)—I am very pleased to be here to support the Honey Legislation (Repeal and Amendment) Bill. Australia is in a unique position to take advantage of an extensive variety of native eucalypts and flora for the production of single floral variety honey. It is in this area that Australian apiarists are making a name for themselves. The opportunity to produce commercial quantities of over 30 varieties of honey is unheard of anywhere else in the world. Often hidden from the public eye, beekeepers may give the impression of being involved in a small scale operation. From what I have learned, nothing could be further from the truth. As part of a huge national network of producers, apiarists contribute thousands of dollars to the Australian economy through the sale of honey and associated products to countries all over the world.

Locally, the Honey Corporation at Maryborough—and I am indebted for the assistance I received from Mr Warwick Wiltshire, the managing director of that company—has broken into the lucrative Asian market, whose well-known demand for quality means that only the best produce is selected for export. Nationally apiarists are currently producing over 21,000 tonnes of honey a year, with the domestic consumption of Australian honey at an encouraging 15,404 tonnes. The future certainly seems bright for the industry.

I indicate to the House that through the coalition's Fightback package the Australian honey industry can only continue to prosper and grow. Operating costs in the industry will be reduced considerably through the replacement of seven current taxes and charges with just one goods and services tax. This restructure of Australia's taxation system will see the abolition of the fuel excise and a subsequent reduction in the cost of petrol and petroleum products by about 26c per litre. As beekeepers often travel thousands of kilometres to meet the needs of their industry, a reduction of this size surely will mean a significant saving for the industry.

The abolition of wholesale sales tax will mean a reduction in the cost of their equipment. Imported equipment will be even cheaper because of the phasing out of customs duty. In fact, the vehicles operated by people within this industry—a vital factor in any apiarist's business operation—will cost much less to buy and will certainly cost less to run and maintain. Through the combined savings of Fightback's reforms the overall running costs of their businesses will certainly be reduced.

The coalition recognises the important contribution Victorian apiarists have made to this country since organised honey production first started here over 100 years ago. That is why I wish to address some of the issues which are affecting beekeepers in this nation. There are also other issues which come more properly within the realm and under the control of State governments, and these include the continuing use of public and private lands by apiarists throughout Australia. In recent years there has been restriction of access to many areas of land. Beekeepers are not always able to have free access to land. I certainly have made representations on many occasions to the Victorian State Government on this issue of
accessibility to land for beekeepers in the industry.

The viability of the beekeeping industry is reflected in the steady increase in the number of members in the Central Victorian Apiarists Association. I recently had the pleasure of opening its annual meeting and speaking to its members. That organisation has almost 100 members. It is clear that that area of north-central Victoria is playing a very strong role in the production of Australian honey.

I also mentioned the Honey Corporation of Australia, which has a plant in Maryborough in my electorate. It plays a very important role in exporting our honey products throughout the world. I am pleased to indicate to the House the growth in the apiary industry in the central Victorian area, and I want to take this opportunity to indicate that I have spoken to a number of people in that industry. They support the measures that are contained in this legislation.

The Honey Board has been very successful for some 30 years, but generally the industry is in agreement with the termination of that board and the transfer of some of its functions to the Australian Horticultural Corporation, principally because of the expected savings in administration costs which will be involved. I understand that the industry—represented by the Federal Council of Australian Apiarists Association and the Honey Packers and Marketers Association of Australia—has been consulted and has been involved with the Government in negotiating the changes. In general, it is in agreement with the legislation and has requested that the Honey Board be terminated at the end of this year.

I am delighted to participate in this debate because many rural members who are close to me, particularly the honourable member for McEwen (Mrs Bailey) and the honourable member for Ballarat (Mr Ronaldson), also have a very viable apiary industry—

Mr Bruce Scott—There is one in Maranoa too.

Mr Reid—Some in Maranoa? How sweet it is. I can assure the honourable member that there is a very active industry in the area around north-central Victoria. Apiarists travel far and wide, but I do not know that they quite get up to Maranoa from my area. They certainly do travel long distances. That is why I made reference to the cost savings to be obtained with the introduction of the Fightback package; for example, the savings in fuel costs which are a major expense for the industry in gathering that wonderful product.

Research and development will continue through the Honeybee Research and Development Corporation, and I understand that that change is expected to save the industry approximately $100,000 a year in administration costs. As I said, as the apiary industry is becoming more involved in commercial pollination, the closer association with horticulture is expected to be beneficial, not only for apiarists and the honey industry but also for the horticulture industry.

The marketing component of the honey export charge is being repealed and should save approximately $70,000 a year. It was considered that this amount was too small for generic export promotion, particularly as most exports are in bulk for branding overseas. I have seen evidence of this at the Honey Corporation. It exports some bulk honey but it also does some of its own packaging—and it is very attractive packaging, I might add. It presents a very good product, a product much sought after—particularly, as I said earlier, by the Asian market. I am pleased to support this legislation on behalf of the apiarists in the north-central Victorian area.

Mrs Sullivan (Moncrieff) (5.37 p.m.)—It might cause some honourable members a little surprise that I rise to speak on this Honey Legislation (Repeal and Amendment) Bill. Of course, I have a very large and very rich rural area which does produce some honey—not to the extent of some others, but it does produce many other primary products. On a previous occasion in this chamber I had reason to speak very strongly on an Act which is being amended by this Honey Legislation (Repeal and Amendment) Act, namely, the Australian Horticultural Corporation Act 1987. I do not want to be tedious, but I would like to direct honourable members’ attention to the contents of the
Honey Legislation (Repeal and Amendment) Bill 1992 instead of just talking about how many honeybees there are in my electorate. There is a relevance to those other Acts.

I rise, I hope—and I do not mean to pun—not to inject a sour note into this when I say that the legislation essentially is repealing the Honey Board, and there are some consequential amendments as a result. The second reading speech of the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Defence (Mr Price) heaped praise on the Honey Board for the job it has done, and it certainly deserves praise as it has done a very good job. But it has not done a terribly good job in one area, and it is an area of principle that concerns me. Last night, if I had not been in the chair myself, I would have spoken on some grain legislation which you, Mr Deputy Speaker, spoke on at great length—such length that I hoped the debate would have gone on today, but such was not my luck. But as I sat in the chair it occurred to me that there is a matter that is very important to this Parliament which has been totally ignored.

There is a certain amount of frustration in this chamber as to whether the House of Representatives works as it should in terms of safeguarding the public interest. Earlier today we had a very brief debate on the subject of Question Time, which is one area of frustration. I have had a growing feeling that it is largely our fault that the lack of accountability that we all deplore has been allowed to grow to the quite dramatic extent it has. It is very difficult when certain aspects of the Standing Orders are exploited. I agree with that. But there are other areas where it is not difficult. I am referring to the matter of annual reports by government bodies.

The Honey Board, under its legislation, is required to put in an annual report. I refer to the Honey Marketing Act 1988 and I note that the matter of the annual report is listed under 'Miscellaneous'. I would have thought it was a little more than 'miscellaneous'. In most other Acts it is listed under 'accountability', which is more important. Section 59 of this Act, which refers to the annual report, states:

The Board shall, as soon as practicable after 30 June 1989 and each later 30 June, prepare and give to the Minister a report on the operation of this Act during the financial year that ended on that day, together with financial statements for that year in such form as the Minister for Finance approves.

It goes on to detail what the Act must cover. The fourth part of section 59 of the 1988 Act states:

The Minister shall cause the annual report and financial statements, together with the report of the Board's auditor, to be laid before each House of the Parliament within 15 sitting days of that House after their receipt by the Minister.

It is up to us to make sure that these corporations and boards are made accountable. I note that the Primary Industries and Energy Research and Development Act is involved in this, too. In general terms, we in this Parliament several times a year, even several times a session, give our stamp of approval to amendments that have the effect of making law certain levies. These levies are usually debated by the industry concerned and recommended by the industry concerned. Very occasionally they become controversial. They are not controversial, I hasten to add, in the case of honey, which has run its business fairly well.

Nevertheless, we put into legislative form certain things that primary producers of one sort or another must abide by. Money is handed over to these corporations and boards and, on occasions, public money is, too. The only form of real accountability for what is going on and the only way we can really keep a sanction on these bodies on behalf of our constituents, the growers and producers, is through an examination of their reports. Therefore, it is very important that corporations, boards, government departments, et cetera take this matter of reporting very seriously.

Over this past week I have been taking some note of the annual reports that have been coming in. I decided, when this debate came on, to have a look at the position in relation to the Australian Honey Board. I find that its last report was the report for 1991; that is, we have no report in front of this Parliament accounting for the Board's activities since 30 June 1991. It is now 20
August 1992. I then went to investigate when that report was tabled in parliament, and I found it was tabled on 19 December 1991, which was nearly six months after the end of its reporting period.

I recall that when I was in the Senate—a phrase I am allowed to use in this chamber—this was frequently an issue in Estimates committees. For some time, as we pursued the matter of annual reports through Estimates committees, the public servants attempted to lead us around in circles, which they could do for only so long. For a little while we followed to see what came out of it without any illusions about what was going on. They tended to blame the Auditor-General because all of these reports must have a certificate from the Auditor-General before they go to the Minister and are tabled. So then we pursued it with the Auditor-General. We got dates out of the Auditor-General about when he had got the report and how long he had had it for audit. I would have to say, almost without exception, in 99.9 per cent of cases the Auditor-General was not to blame. The Auditor-General in fact was very prompt in the handling of the finances of the corporations, boards and departments provided that there was not a problem with the accounts. If there was a problem, of course there would be a hold-up.

So the next thing we were told was that the Minister has 15 sitting days in which to table this, and that is quite a long time. We have seven sitting days in each fortnight, so 15 sitting days takes us into the third sitting fortnight, which is three months. So we pursued that and we found that reports were held up in a Minister's office as many times as applied to the Auditor-General; they were not. Ministers tend to be very expeditious in approving and tabling the report. The problem always went back to what priority the department, corporation or board gave the report. When we had excluded those other things, we got the little bleats of, 'Oh, but we are so busy.' Indeed, they are so busy, but I cannot think what they could be so busy with for 15 months that they could not have fulfilled this basic responsibility.

I believe the reason is that we do not ever raise or press the issue here—and we should. I am putting this chamber on notice that I intend to raise this subject at every conceivable opportunity. I would like to know from the Minister for Primary Industries and Energy (Mr Crean)—in the reply to the second reading, if not on the third reading if that is the way it is to go because of time; I realise I have caught the Minister for Defence Science and Personnel (Mr Bilney), who is at the table and who is not the Minister responsible in this case, at a bit of a loss, but he might be able to get the information before he replies, as it should be easy to get—whether he has yet received the report of the Honey Board for the most recent period, which I would think would be 30 June 1992. When did the Minister receive the report for the year 1990-91? In other words, how far in advance of 19 December 1991 was it received? I think that is very important.

I refer back to the Primary Industries and Energy Research and Development Act, which refers to the annual report under 'Accountability'. This is the Act I spoke on some time ago when this was being set up. The producers were saying, 'Whacko.' The then Minister for Primary Industries and Energy, now the Minister for Trade and Overseas Development (Mr Kerin), was saying what a wonderful stroke this was. I remember that when the then Australian Meat and Livestock Corporation went in under the umbrella it was said what a great thing this was for producers. I said then that it meant going down a track of about 18 months difference in accountability.

In this Primary Industries and Energy Research and Development Act one finds that the only accountability for many of these primary producer organisations is when the report is discussed at an annual meeting. Mr Deputy Speaker, you are familiar with primary producer organisations, as are other people in this chamber. There is a year between meetings; it is not easy to get them together; it is expensive. The chances are that by the time they get together they are debating a report that is at least 18 months out of date. So how one can ever make any
of these bodies responsible to the producer through debating at an annual meeting a report that is 18 months—perhaps 2 1/2 years—out of date is really beyond me.

I point out another date that is very relevant to this; it is one that I would have raised last night if I had not been in the chair. I refer to the Grains Council of Australia. The shadow Minister for regional and rural development, the honourable member for Maranoa (Mr Bruce Scott), who is at the table, made a very eloquent speech on the subject of grain production. The Grains Council of Australia tabled its 1991 report on 25 March this year. We sat before 25 March this year. That is what the Grains Council thinks of parliament and its producers. I alert those honourable members who may not be so new to the fact, and particularly those representing primary producers, that they really ought to take some note of this. They will have all sorts of blandishments put to them; but remember: it is in our hands. There is a public accountability situation and if we do not say, 'Why wasn’t this report tabled earlier? Whose fault is it? What priorities are these organisations giving to parliament?', who will say it? Nobody will.

It is a reflection on this chamber that they give it such a low priority. That, essentially, is all I want to say. If the Minister could indicate whether a few more minutes of my speaking might allow him to get the answer, I will continue.

Mr Bilney—I have it.

Mrs SULLIVAN—Good. I will be very interested to hear it. Thank you.

Mr BILNEY (Kingston—Minister for Defence Science and Personnel) (5.50 p.m.)—As the honourable member for Moncrieff (Mrs Sullivan) rightly says, I am not the Minister responsible for the Honey Legislation (Repeal and Amendment) Bill, but I have received some advice about the specific matters that she raised. The 1991 report was, I am led to believe, received in late November 1991. The current report has been prepared, but my understanding is that the accounts need to be approved by the board and then audited. That process takes some time. Even to look at a three-month delay between the end of the financial year and the availability of an approved report is pretty optimistic, so I am told.

Mrs Sullivan—Only if there is something wrong with the report. I have covered this. I will put a question on notice about it.

Mr BILNEY—In any case, that is my understanding. I do undertake, even if the honourable member does not put a question on notice, to ensure that this is drawn to the attention of the Minister for Primary Industries and Energy (Mr Crean) and that he gets a more detailed response to the honourable member.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Bill read a second time.

Message from Governor-General recommending appropriation announced.

Third Reading

Leave granted for third reading to be moved forthwith.

Bill (on motion by Mr Bilney) read a third time.

HEALTH AND COMMUNITY SERVICES LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 1992

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 25 June, on motion by Mr Howe:

That the Bill be now read a second time.

Dr BOB WOODS (Lowe) (5.53 p.m.)—The Health and Community Services Legislation Amendment Bill 1992 is an omnibus Bill. It provides a number of minor amendments to various pieces of health legislation. In relation to the majority of these amendments the coalition has no concerns and recognises the need for them. However, I would like to bring a couple of the amendments to the attention of the House.

Firstly, the Bill provides for removing the legislative provisions for the now infamous 'black box', which was abandoned by the Government after the embarrassing findings of a joint report by the Australian Audit Office and the Department of Finance. The Government alleged that something over 5 per cent of prescriptions was issued to people
ripping off the system when in fact the level was much lower than had been estimated. The Government claimed it would save something like $40m. The end result of the report and the review was that it would save less than $15m. When we allowed for the actual cost of the scheme and the leasing of the equipment the whole thing was clearly a nonsense.

Another major objection was that if the pharmacist incorrectly charged the concession rate the pharmacist, not the patient, was penalised and had the dispensing fee docked. Pharmacists were, therefore, being made liable for the fraud of the patient.

As a result of our concerns, the proposed system was referred to the joint inquiry and a more realistic error rate, rather than the 5.2 per cent, was found to be 2 or 3 per cent. The inquiry also disputed the value of the ineligible benefit. The Government claimed $12.50; the end result was something like $7.90. So with gross savings of only $10m, bearing in mind the cost of supporting the system, it was clearly not viable. This is a major defeat for the Government. It was a problem that we pointed out right from the beginning—right the way through. The pharmacy profession had quite rightly pointed this out and maintained the usual high standards of integrity it is renowned for. While the pharmacists have been required to check eligibility since 1986, the new arrangement will mean that pensioners and other concessional beneficiaries will be required to produce their entitlement cards; otherwise medications will be issued to them at the higher general patient rate rather than at the cheaper concession rate.

Sadly, the new system will not prevent non-Australian residents or other ineligible people from claiming entitlements at the $15.90 rate for often very expensive medications. We are supporting the medication needs of many overseas visitors. The Government has conceded that it has failed to prevent this. We believe that the Government has failed to prevent this loophole being blocked. We think that is wrong. Clearly, we should not be subsidising overseas health systems.

The Government now seems to be trying to force pharmacists to agree to financial responsibility for the fraudulent claims of patients who claim at the lower rate. An agreement is being negotiated outside the scope of this legislation. The Pharmacy Guild, understandably—and we support it entirely—is reluctant for its members to be policemen for the Government, and is negotiating an agreement with the Government in this regard. They should not be held responsible for mistakes made by the Government, for example, with entitlement numbers.

What will happen in cases where a patient’s entitlement has ended, despite the production of an apparently valid concessional benefit card? Without an on-line system the pharmacist will not have any way of knowing the entitlement has ended. Clearly, the pharmacist should not be held responsible for these problems.

The coalition also has major concerns that no pharmacist should be penalised until the agreement is reached. Currently the legislation provides for 1 July. So I would appreciate an undertaking from the Minister that no retrospectivity will be involved in terms of penalising pharmacists. I would be grateful at some date for an indication that that is the case.

The Government believes that this new system will save something like $81/2m a year, based on the revised calculations of the joint inquiry. In principle, therefore, we will support this legislation. It does not involve an on-line system. Therefore, the Privacy Commissioner has not raised any objections or concerns.

We have concerns about the six-month rest period that currently exists but is going to be removed. The Pharmacy Guild and the National Association of Nursing Homes and Private Hospitals have raised objections to this. Potentially it could mean that the Minister can shut down the pharmaceutical operations of a private hospital as soon as it faces any financial difficulties. The Department of Health, Housing and Community Services says this is necessary to make sure that the PRA still continues to work. However, this is not something which we believe is necessary. We will undertake to
monitor this to make sure that this particular provision is not being abused.

I now refer to Australian Hearing Services. The Government has already admitted that the drafting of this part of the Bill is defective. As it currently stands, the drafted Bill removes the discretion of the Minister to determine special classes of persons who, despite their non-residency, should be deemed eligible. I understand that an amendment will be moved by the Government during this debate.

We will also be seeking assurances from the Government that non-Australian war veterans, those who have fought for Australia but happen not to be Australians, will continue to have access to services provided by the Hearing Services Authority. Whilst such claims are infrequent, it is very important that we preserve the rights of these people and that this arrangement not be prevented from continuing.

On that basis we will agree to support this legislation. I have circulated an amendment to the motion for the second reading, criticising the Government for its failure to implement an appropriate checking system, amongst other things. I move:

That all words after "That" be omitted with a view to substituting the following words: "whilst not declining to give the Bill a second reading, the House expresses its concern that the Government:

(1) has failed to implement a satisfactory eligibility checking system so as to prevent non-Australian residents and other ineligible individuals from wrongly receiving expensive pharmaceuticals at prices subsidised by the Government under the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme and ultimately paid for by the Australian taxpayers;

(2) is attempting to make pharmacists financially responsible for the fraudulent claims of ineligible individuals who obtain subsidised pharmaceuticals under the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme at concessional rates;

(3) presented to the House grossly inaccurate costings of the estimated savings of the on-line computer eligibility checking system; and

(4) was publicly forced to reverse its proposal to proceed with the on-line computer eligibility checking system following the Senate Committee report which found the estimated savings were inaccurate".

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Truss)—Is the amendment seconded?

Mr Bruce Scott—I second the amendment.

Debate (on motion by Mr Bilney) adjourned.

Sitting suspended from 6 to 7.30 p.m.

APPROPRIATION BILL (No. 1) 1992-93

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 18 August, on motion by Mr Dawkins:

That the Bill be now read a second time.

Dr HEWSON (Wentworth—Leader of the Opposition) (7.30 p.m.)—The 1992-93 Budget, which was brought down on Tuesday night, is already dead in the water. It has been discredited in record time. We should never forget that John Kerin was sacked for bringing in a better Budget than this one. Why is it dead? Firstly, it is dead because of its dishonesty. It has failed to honestly assess the state of our nation and the magnitude of our problems, and to deliver policy solutions to deal with those problems. Secondly, it is dead because it has been almost universally canned by every major commentator in Australia.

Thirdly, it is dead because the Treasurer (Mr Dawkins) himself has undermined his own Budget. There is a $50 billion accumulation of deficits that is unfunded. He came here the other night with a secret tax agenda. All of us on this side of the Parliament know that the only difference between you and us in terms of the funding of the package is that we are honest enough to say that we are going to have a GST. You put yours in the bottom drawer and you are going to pull it out after the next election, which of course you have absolutely no hope of winning. You are short $50 billion, but for you the GST will be an additional tax, not part of a tax reform package, a package that abolishes seven taxes. It will just be yet another increase in the tax burdens on average Australians.
The Budget is dead also because the Treasurer has undermined the Medicare elements of the Budget. The Treasurer said that the increase in the levy will not go ahead unless he gets State agreement. That means there will not be any marginal adjustment to the hospital system under this Government unless the States get agreement. The unions have been given a veto power over the whole thing. We are yet to know whether they will give it a tick in the box.

Finally, it is dead because the Minister for Local Government (Mr Simmons) made a pretty amateurish attempt at pork-barrelling. If you want to go into pork-barrelling, you should leave it to the Prime Minister (Mr Keating). It was a very amateurish attempt to try to buy votes which blew up in your face when your numbers did not add up.

It was supposed to be a traditional Labor Budget. But the longest serving Labor Prime Minister in this country, Bob Hawke—your predecessor—has also canned the Budget. He has questioned its credibility and your credibility. He has talked about the tax that is hanging over the Budget and its credibility.

The Budget, as an economic document, is dead in the water because it does not deal with the problems of this country. I have heard the Prime Minister on many occasions over the years say that in this country our economic problems are that we spend too much, we produce too little, we save too little and we have too much debt. What does the Budget do? It spends more. It does nothing about production. It gives us an all-time low savings rate. Debt will skyrocket as a result of this Budget and its effect on this economy over the rest of this decade. It does not solve our economic problems; it only services them. It does not create real jobs; it just hides people off the unemployment queues. There are plenty of examples I could give as to how this Budget does not do the job in economic terms.

These job subsidies and madcap job creation schemes just do not work. They do not create jobs. Sure, they give people shovels and line them up with the local councils, but those jobs stop and the shovels disappear when the money stops. They are not real jobs; they are mickey mouse jobs. What about your training scheme? You are going to have people trained, but there is no link to the workplace. You train people and you will end up with the best trained and best educated dole queues in the world. It does not solve the problem. It hides people off the unemployment roll in training schemes.

What about the subsidies for some of your mates in the business community? You help them live with the inefficiencies of their operations rather than lowering their business costs so they can be internationally competitive and internationally efficient. It does not solve the problem. What about your infrastructure spending—for example, the money you put into railways? We will have nice, glossy rail lines all around Australia, but unless you do something fundamental about the work practices and the poor management and the government ownership and mismanagement of the railways, you will only have shiny railway tracks on which you can lose money and probably lose it faster. You are putting money into Government buildings. We have a glut of office space in Australia and these guys are going into the property market. They do not deal with the problems; they only service the problems.

The Budget was supposed to be a shrewd political document. It was supposed to neutralise Fightback, or at least pinch the bits you would like to have on your side. It was supposed to buy votes in key marginal seats and buy off vested interests. I notice from the reaction of a lot of those so-called vested interests that have canned you that it is a political failure as well.

This Budget is not about job creation; it is about vote creation. It is about vote creation by spending money you do not have to buy those votes. It is not a Budget that is going to bring home our bacon. It is simply a Budget that was designed to save Paul Keating’s bacon. It is not a document for the future. It is a document by a Government that has no future. I suggest that tonight we do not spend any more time on this Budget. Let us not spend any more time on a failed Budget. Let us not spend any more time on a failed
Government. Let us talk about the future of our great nation.

I challenge the Prime Minister and the Treasurer, who are of a similar age to me, to think back to the period when they were growing up, to some of the circumstances that existed and to what were our hopes and aspirations in this country. I put it to you that you would never have contemplated the possibility that we would have one million Australians unemployed. You would not have contemplated the possibility, in particular, that a so-called Labor Government had created that one million unemployed.

You would never have contemplated the possibility that this nation could be almost $200 billion in debt. Perhaps under the sorts of policies we have seen it will go to $400 billion in the course of the decade. You would never have contemplated a situation in which hospital queues were getting longer and 50,000 or 60,000 kids could not get into university, as was the case this year. Think about all the opportunities we had when we were leaving school—the job opportunities and the education opportunities.

You would never have contemplated the possibility that millions and millions of Australians would actually feel like strangers in their own country; would actually feel excluded; would actually feel that they had been thrown outside the system in their own country. But that is how millions and millions of Australians feel today in the circumstances of the worst recession in 60 years. Who would have thought in those days that when we grew up and had children we would be looking down the gun barrel of leaving our children a lower standard of living than we would enjoy ourselves? That is the bottom line of the sorts of policies you have run.

If you, Prime Minister, had suggested to me in those days that countries such as Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan and even Japan could have outperformed us significantly in the course of the period in which we grew up and, ultimately, matched our living standards, I would have genuinely thought you were out of your tree. Japan's standard of living was two-thirds that of ours in 1970. It passed us in 1980. Now we have less than two-thirds of its standard of living in the 1990s. Hong Kong, Singapore and Taiwan, places that do not have a lot of natural advantages in an economic sense, are about to match our standard of living in this decade. You would not have contemplated that, and nor would I, but that is where this country is at present.

I think it is important that we stop and ask ourselves why this is happening. Why is it that a country that is so well placed—so uniquely placed—with such an abundance of natural resources and so many opportunities, has squandered those opportunities in the course of the current generation?

I think the principal difference between you and ourselves is the increasing role of government and the influence of government in this country over that period. I personally date it with the early 1970s and the arrival of Gough Whitlam. I thought particularly pertinent the comparison that was made by Max Walsh between the final days of the Whitlam Government and the final days of the Keating Government. It was a particularly appropriate one in the current circumstances.

Government and bureaucracies have got bigger and bigger over this period. They have got more intrusive and more regulatory. There is more participation in business and more control over the lives of average Australians and that, more than anything else, has had the fundamental effects that we are observing in our economy today. It significantly reduced the private sector's capacity to create wealth and jobs.

We believe that the private sector is the essential mechanism by which jobs are created in this country. Real jobs and real wealth are created in the private sector. The continual growth of government, the squeezing of government, the suffocation of government, have driven the private sector backwards and are destroying its capacity to create wealth and to create jobs.

The pervasiveness of government has squashed individual incentive, it has restricted individual freedom and it has restricted individual capacity for choice. Just think about how tough it has become for someone to go and start a business, for example. Dozens of approvals, licences and forms have
got to be dealt with in order to get a business under way. The stifling effect of increasing government and increasing government regulation have done the job.

If we look at some other effects of the size and influence of government, I guess one of the most disturbing is the increased dependence that has emerged on government. Welfare dependency today is roughly double what it was in the early 1970s in Australia. Nearly four million Australians are on some form of welfare assistance at present, as recent newspaper headlines have documented—a major impact in terms of dependency not just for individuals but for businesses. You have built an incestuous climate where favoured ones come in and look for favoured treatment. One businessman comes in and says, 'He got a tariff; I want a tariff. He got a quota; I want a quota. He got a subsidy; I want a subsidy'. That is the nature of the economy and the economic system that you have built by increasingly consolidating and intensifying the impact of government.

I guess, most disturbingly, it has had a very significant effect on our attitudes. People are constantly being led to accept less than the best. All your documents, all your Budget Papers, compared our performance to the past. You did not compare our performance to any significant extent with some of those countries that have outperformed us; no, you have rationalised it relative with the past. Our waterfront is getting better because it is less inefficient than it was last year. It still might be about 100 to 150 per cent short of best international practice but that does not matter; it is getting better. You have rationalised second best performance which has had a very significant effect on basic attitudes and values in this country. Could you imagine Allan Border coming back from a cricket series and saying, 'Well, guys, I lost the Ashes but we scored more runs than we did the time before'. That is the type of rationalisation we had from you guys in the Budget Papers about our recent economic performance.

We come to the fundamental difference between you and us. We believe that real wealth and real jobs are created through the private sector. They are not created by building another bureaucracy; they are not created by spending money, as you did in this Budget, that you do not have, because ultimately that money has got to be paid for, ultimately that expenditure has got to be funded and that can have a very significant effect on the total supply of jobs and wealth in this country.

The key difference between you and us is that we believe in the private sector, we believe in individual Australians and we believe in the forces of the market and the forces of competition. You believe in the big brother, the big, overbearing, suffocating government that is supposed to bring all the answers. If you do not want to believe me, you go through the Budget document and count the number of times you said that the Government was going to create jobs. You do not create jobs; you just hide unemployment.

That is why Fightback puts its emphasis on average Australians. We believe that Australians are able to match and able to beat the best in the world. We certainly do it in sport, as we saw in recent days at the Olympics. Why are we not doing it with our economic and business performance? Australians have always been better than their governments. We have never had the Government we deserve in this country.

That is what Fightback is all about: setting a government framework that provides the mechanism whereby the private sector can carry the main task at what it is good at, at what it can do, which is generating wealth and generating jobs. Secondly, the Government has to take care of the genuinely needy. One of the great tragedies with the sort of mentality that you guys develop is that you keep shrinking the size of the economic cake and you fight about the distribution of that cake when what you should be doing is thinking about building a bigger cake so that everybody can have more. You reduce everyone to the lowest common denominator; government suffocates the process; the private sector is driven out backwards; jobs are permanently lost and we are left with major social and economic trauma in this country.
Fightback seeks to reverse that process, to put its faith back in individual Australians, to give individual Australians choice, to give them the opportunity to get greater control over their lives. Fightback seeks less government and more focus on business, cutting business costs, giving businesses the scope to get out and do what only they can do, which is create wealth and create jobs by matching the best in the world.

As I said, the Government does have a responsibility to look after the disadvantaged and we take that very seriously. We do it in a way that targets that money very effectively and we set out to increase the assistance given to those who are genuinely disadvantaged, while creating the circumstances where people can actually get out there and get a job, generate wealth and rebuild this country to the potential that we all know it really has.

Fightback is the most honest document that has ever been brought into the political process in Australia. It honestly addresses our problems in this country and it provides realistic solutions. It does not service the problem like you guys; it actually solves the problem which is fundamentally important in the circumstances in which we find ourselves, where we are about to leave a lower standard of living to our children than we have enjoyed ourselves. The focus is on job creation, on debt reduction and on generating wealth and national saving. As I say, it is on solutions, not just servicing the problem.

The centrepiece of Fightback is, of course, industrial relations reform. I notice the way in which you started to use our words—"enterprise bargaining"—but you have no idea what enterprise bargaining really means. You are so paranoid about your electoral chances that you have taken our words, but you do not take our substance. The very essence of Fightback, as I say, is giving individuals choice and giving them capacity to influence their own lives. When you go to the workplace individuals want the right to talk to their employers directly if they wish, or to join a union if they wish. Equally, employers want the right to be able to talk to their employees directly without the presence of the union if they choose. It is an issue of choice.

Workers should also be given the opportunity to negotiate all the terms and conditions of their employment above certain minima. We will make sure that they are not exploited, but above the minima they should have the capacity to negotiate with their employer. As I go around Australia people cannot understand why some of these events that have occurred in recent days have been allowed to take place.

For example, in the Pilbara, one fellow does not want to join a union so we lose about $50m or $60m worth of exports—simply because one person did not want to join a union. If you go down to Burnie in Tasmania, people actually wanted to cross the picket line and go to work and they were prevented from doing that under the circumstances of that dispute, which you whipped up to a substantial extent to try to score cheap political points. What about the shearer in Queensland who wanted to work on a Sunday and was not allowed? What is wrong with working seven days a week, 365 days a year in this country? What about the workers at SPC who wanted the right to negotiate to save their jobs? They were heavied and muscled by Halfpenny and others from the Victorian Trades Hall Council to try to constrain their opportunities.

Fightback gives those people choice. It gives them greater control over their lives; it gives them the right to be a member of a union or not to be a member of a union; it gives wage outcomes that are internationally competitive; it gives individuals a chance to earn more. As they lift their game, they earn more; they take home more. There are plenty of examples around the world where people earn a lot more because they are productive and they have improved the quality of their performance.

Similarly, rigidities in the current wage system exclude some people from a job. Young people, most importantly, are given no choice under your type of system. You have eliminated the gap between youth wages and adult wages in many cases, or you have narrowed the gap, which discriminates these young kids out of the workplace. It is about
time you had a genuine minimum youth training wage that would give them the chance to get a job, give them the chance to get a start in life and give them a chance to actually get their foot on the first rung of what could be a career. Presently, your system discriminates against those kids.

Industrial relations reform is, importantly, backed up by tax reform—the tax reform that is essential to actually give individuals more money in their pockets, more return for their efforts and a greater incentive to actually work harder, to work overtime, to take a promotion, to lift their game and to gain additional education, training or whatever. They would have that incentive under a tax system with substantially lower tax rates. In this country marginal tax rates have doubled in terms of the average income earner in the last 20 or 30 years. So very high income tax rates of nearly 40c in the dollar cut in at incomes of about $21,000—well below average earnings in Australia.

People say to me, 'Why don't we have a Hong Kong tax system?'. Fightback will give it to you. On an average income of $25,000 you will pay 14c in the dollar in tax and you will keep 86c in your pocket. People will have the opportunity to decide when they buy how much tax they pay by what they buy. The GST fundamentally facilitates the abolition of seven other taxes—such as payroll tax—which is very important from the point of view of jobs. The Prime Minister himself said that the abolition of payroll tax would create 200,000 jobs. Why don't you do that? We are doing it. It used to be part of your platform. Of course, there is a very significant reduction in business costs which allows business to employ significantly more people.

Similarly, we have to attack infrastructure costs so that the 20 to 50 per cent cost disadvantage on the waterfront, in shipping, and in domestic transportation can be eliminated. You can laugh, Ralph Willis, but I do not see any excuse for why we do not have the best ports in the world, the best rail system in the world, the best road transport system in the world, or the best coastal shipping. I can see that he is starting to agree with me; I am actually starting to convince him.

We have to re-establish choice in education. We have to start funding individuals rather than institutions. We have to build competition between institutions and we have to re-establish things like excellence—remember that word, Kim Beazley? Excellence and merit are what the system should be based on.

In the hospital system we have to deal with the problems of overservicing, not tinker with them and probably not do anything. You have had about three goes at trying to patch up Medicare. Your Whip has a proposal to nationalise the whole health system. In savings and superannuation you have to give tax incentives so that people have the choice. Your answer on training is compulsion; your answer on super is compulsion. Our answer is to give people the tax incentives so that they get the choice. They can decide how much they save. They have a strong incentive to save and to prepare for their retirement.

Of course, Fightback goes through a host of other areas, including things like immigration, which should be cut dramatically—cut more significantly than you have done. It does not do the migrants or some other government any good to have 40 per cent of them on unemployment benefits 12 months after they have arrived. A significant cut in immigration is an essential part of the problem. I think we should hold down immigration until the labour market makes a significant recovery.

Of course, there is a very significant role for cuts in expenditure as part of that package in making sure that you target the expenditure to those most in need. You should double family allowances to the low income levels, but as you go up the income scale and you get substantial income tax cuts you should take greater financial responsibility for yourself and your family. You should target it to the needy and make sure that they get more. As you go up the income scale you should make sure that you pull back those benefits so that the people are in a position to take care of the costs of education, health care or whatever. That is a fundamental difference between us and the Government.
For far too long we have kidded ourselves in this country that you can tax people to the hilt without destroying incentive. For far too long we have kidded ourselves that you can grant everyone the same wage rise without destroying initiative. For far too long we have kidded ourselves in this country that you can throw government money at every single social problem without destroying self-help and self-respect. For far too long in this country we have kidded ourselves that you can load business with red tape, green tape, black tape and a host of cost disadvantages without destroying national wealth. Perhaps most importantly to a lot of Australians, for far too long we have kidded ourselves that you can constantly knock your country and denigrate your flag without destroying national pride. Your concept of compassion—

Mr Keating—You are the one who has done that.

Dr HEWSON—You should listen to this because it is very important. Your concept of compassion is to compensate people to whom you have denied choice, freedom and opportunity as a result of your policies. That is your idea of compassion. I remember you saying not long ago that when they fall off the pace you will reach back and pull them up. What you mean is that you will pull everyone else down to the lowest common denominator. You try to compensate them for what you never gave them, when genuine compassion is giving them a job rather than a welfare cheque, giving them an opportunity and giving them greater control over their lives.

I think it is very important, Prime Minister, that tonight we try in the final minutes I have left to get you to focus on the magnitude of the problem in this country. I suggest that you and the Treasurer and I go down to Melbourne and take each of the unemployed and link them, arm by arm, from Melbourne all the way up the Hume Highway. How far do you think that line would go? It would go up across the Victorian border, right through the very heart of the seat of Blaxland—heard of that; been there lately?—through the city of Sydney and almost to Newcastle. That is the magnitude of the shame and the economic problem that you have wrought on this country.

I think what you and John Dawkins should do is go along and talk to some of those people, one by one; look them in the eye and ask them about how your 18 per cent interest rate drove them out of their homes—how they had to sell up their homes. Or you could ask how the farmers who were paying 25 per cent interest rates were driven off their farms. Or you could talk to the small business people who have lost their businesses and their homes. That is the price these people have been asked to pay by your politically expedient policy making. In my view, people will never forgive you and they will never forgive your new Treasurer for putting your job significantly ahead of everybody else's job.

Mr WILLIS (Gellibrand—Minister for Finance) (7.57 p.m.)—I think the Leader of the Opposition (Dr Hewson) must have got his dates mixed up; he thought he was talking to a Liberal Party branch meeting tonight. He was supposed to be addressing the Budget, but he had virtually nothing to say about the Budget. All he could talk about was some world that he envisages which would be so delightful if only he could live in it. But he has no idea how he would ever get there. It is a world that will never exist anyway.

The Leader of the Opposition is totally confused about what actually exists in this country. He talks about how we are squeezing out the private sector with this large public sector. We have one of the smallest public sectors in the Western developed world.

Mr Ronaldson—Ha, ha!

Mr WILLIS—It is an absolute fact, there is no need to laugh about it. We do not have a large public sector. Yet those opposite live in this mad ideological world in which they think the Government is all pervasive and is squeezing out individual enterprise and crushing the private sector. If that is so, then what is happening in the rest of the world? Those opposite are just lunatic in their view. The Leader of the Opposition, who has left the chamber, is lunatic in his view about how this country sits in relation to the rest of the world.
Mr Bradford interjecting—

Mr SPEAKER—Order! If the honourable member for McPherson interjects again I will name him.

Mr WILLIS—It is not a country which is dominated by the public sector. It has a small public sector. It is not a country whose gross domestic product has been shrinking while this Government has been in office, as the Leader of the Opposition said tonight. It is a country which has had growth of over one-third—over 30 per cent—in its gross domestic product since this Government came to office. Apart from the recent period of recession, we have had strong growth in the economy for virtually all of the years we have been in office. We have had growth of over 5 per cent of GDP in some years.

The economy has not been going backwards; the economy has been growing substantially through most of the period we have been in office. It is an economy which has produced 1.4 million more jobs than existed when we came to office, with a rate of growth of employment which far exceeds that of the previous Government. So let us have none of this nonsense about us not being able to produce jobs and growth, or that we have an economy which is being smothered by the public sector. None of those things are true. That is only in the make-believe minds of the Leader of the Opposition and the people who sit behind him.

The people of Australia know that that is not the case. They are also aware that what has been happening in terms of our setback in recent times is not unique to this country, that it has been the experience of virtually all other developed countries in the Western world. All of them had a reduction in their level of economic activity at the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s. Some have gone into recession; others have simply slowed down markedly. All of them have been adversely affected, not least those which have had ultraconservative governments like that of the United Kingdom. Over the last year and a half, that country has been going backwards in terms of its GDP. It has an unemployment rate of over 10 per cent, along with most other countries in the Western developed world, and it has been experiencing a very large increase in its deficit. Its deficit has gone from a surplus in 1989 of 1½ per cent to a deficit now of 4.6 per cent of GDP. That is in the United Kingdom under a Conservative government.

So let us have none of this nonsense about Australia, under a Labor government, uniquely suffering in the world because of some large public sector which an ultra left wing Labor government has foisted on the people of this country. That is a nonsense. It is an absolute absurd creation of the Leader of the Opposition. People who have that kind of mindset, people who have that kind of unreal belief of what is actually happening in this country and how we stand in relation to the rest of the world, cannot possibly be in a position to govern this country. It would be a criminal act for the Leader of the Opposition to become the leader of this country because he is away with the fairies about the real position of this country. He has no idea of the real position in which we exist. He knows nothing about what is actually going on out there.

The Leader of the Opposition tells us how we have to change industrial relations and how we have to have a change in the industrial relations system to enterprise bargaining. He cannot understand it when the people running the major businesses in this country tell him that they are quite happy with the way things are moving. When the leader of BHP, the leader of Ford, the leader of Toyota, et cetera, say, 'We don’t want your industrial relations system; we want the one that exists now as it is very satisfactory to us', he thinks they are crazy because they do not want the ultra right wing ideological world in which he would try to foist them. They recognise that the system has changed significantly and that the enterprise bargaining system which has been put in place under this Government is suitable to their enterprises and is producing the kind of productivity improvement which we all desire to see.

In the last year, a year of very low growth—0.4 per cent growth of GDP—we had a growth in the non-farm market sector of productivity of 2½ per cent. We had a 2½
per cent growth in productivity in a year when the economy was basically flat. This enormous growth in productivity is a reflection of the policies that have been pursued by this Government. The policies have been designed to bring about productivity improvement through enterprise bargaining and through the micro-economic reforms on a whole variety of fronts, which I do not have time to go into tonight, but which have certainly revolutionised many industries, not least some of those referred to by the Leader of the Opposition, such as the waterfront and shipping—areas which he says are way behind the game but, in fact, areas which have large increases in productivity because of the reform programs put into place by this Government.

It is this Government which has brought about micro-economic reform in this country. We needed that micro-economic reform because for 30 of the 33 years before we got into government we had conservative governments in this country which basically did nothing about structural change. They let the economy moulder away, with low productivity and an inability to compete with the rest of the world. We had to hide behind high tariffs and we had no manufactured exports to speak of because we could not compete with the rest of the world. Basically they left us in a position where Australia was sliding behind the rest of the world.

The Leader of the Opposition even admitted it himself when he said that by 1980 Japan had passed us. Who was governing the country then? It was not us: it was the Fraser Government. Who had been governing the country for the previous three decades? Apart from the three years of Whitlam, it was the conservatives. They are the ones who stand culpable for leading Australia in the latter part of the twentieth century with an inability to maintain the growth in living standards that had been a feature of our past. They are the ones who are culpable for not giving us a modern economy. It was this Government that set about trying to give us a modern economy. It has taken the damned hard decisions in industry after industry to bring about micro-economic reform and to bring about the improvements in productivity, to make us competitive and to give us the kind of economy in which we can have a restoration of living standards.

To have the Leader of the Opposition stand up here and tell us that we have done nothing, that we are the ones who are culpable, is the most massive transfer of responsibilities that I have ever seen in my life. The hypocrisy of the man is just beyond belief. To think that he can actually make that accusation of us when he knows in his heart—he must know in his heart—that what he says is absolutely and fundamentally wrong.

It is this Government which has taken the hard decisions and this Government will keep on taking those hard decisions. It would be easy for us, I guess, to go soft on micro-economic reform and probably, in the short term, it would create more jobs. It would be politically easier for us to do that, but we have not done so. We have not shrunk from the tariff cut regime, despite a lot of pressure to do it. If we did it there might be some short term better employment outcome, but long term it would not be in our interests. So we have not done that. We have stuck with the hard decisions and for that we get absolutely no credit; no thanks; no recognition whatever from the Opposition—just its mad view that this Government is culpable for not taking appropriate action. We will not accept that. The people of Australia recognise that it is not true. Any serious analyst in this country recognises that it is not true. Speeches like we just heard from the Leader of the Opposition do the Opposition absolutely no credit. In the view of any serious-minded observer they must show just how far off the game this Opposition really is.

This was supposed to be from the Leader of the Opposition an address about the Budget. He spoke for seven minutes about the Budget. Mostly he made derogatory assertions; there was no analysis at all. Then he went on to talk about his brave new world, which basically is not very brave and is totally deluded. If he had bothered to speak about the Budget we might have had some view from the Opposition as to what it really thinks about it.
However, we know what the Opposition's alternative would be. Its alternative is Fightback. It has said so many times since the Budget. The shadow Treasurer, the honourable member for Flinders (Mr Reith), has told us that that is the alternative. What does that alternative mean for the people of Australia? What it means up-front is that, if this had been the first year in which a Hewson government had come into office, it would have stood here on Tuesday night and introduced stage one of Fightback. Stage one is to slash the public sector. That fits in with the ideological approach of the Leader of the Opposition. He believes the public sector is too large and has to be cut.

So a Hewson government would have cut government expenditure by several billion dollars. The Opposition has said a number of times in recent days that the Budget deficit should be $6 billion or $7 billion less than what we have brought it in at $13.4 billion. Six or seven billion dollars less is well over one per cent of GDP, up to $1¾ per cent of GDP, depending on what proportion of that was asset sales. The Opposition would cut government expenditure very hard, and that would mean what? Would it mean that there would suddenly be an enormous growth in jobs—that we would be creating jobs from day one, as the shadow Treasurer said the other day? Of course we would not.

If we slash demand in an economy which has a shortage of demand, which is the problem at present because business and consumer confidence is low, who is going to take up the slack? Where are the jobs going to come from on day one, day two, day three, or day 100, day 200 or day 300? They are not going to come because there will be less demand and fewer jobs. Any analysis would show that in those circumstances to slash the Budget deficit through cutting government expenditure in that way would be to reduce employment, not to increase it. That is the Opposition's first-year program.

It is remarkable that a couple of parties which pretend that they could become the government of this country at a time when there is a substantial level of unemployment at 11 per cent can seriously put a program to the people of Australia which would have as its first-year effect a substantial increase in the level of unemployment. But that is the Opposition's program—to increase unemployment in the first year.

What would the Opposition do in the second year? It would introduce a goods and services tax, abolish a few other taxes and make various other changes, the combined effect of which would be to push up the inflation rate by about 5 per cent when the present rate is 1.2 per cent. Taking a rate just above that of 2 per cent, the Opposition would put 5 per cent on top of that rate. That would be an enormous increase. That would break the psychology of low inflation, lose the enormous gain that we have now through the low inflation psychology, and have the economy back with the possibility, and the likelihood, of wage increases to compensate. So the cycle of high inflation would be restored.

Of course, the likelihood of wage increases is made even greater by the fact that the Treasury analysis shows that 70 per cent of wage and salary earners would be worse off under Fightback. What are these people going to do in those circumstances? Of course they are going to make wage claims. Of course that is going to build up inflation. Therefore we will have got into a high inflation cycle at a time when there was the enormous opportunity to consolidate low inflation.

It is an absurd policy, a ridiculous policy. The only way that the Opposition could try to stop that inflation from occurring would be to have substantial increases in interest rates. If the Opposition were prepared to really crunch the economy with interest rates, then it might stop that inflationary break-out but at the cost of an enormous further increase in unemployment. The Opposition can have it either one way or the other: it will have either inflation or a massive increase in unemployment through a horrific monetary policy.

That is the policy that the Opposition would pursue. It is the policy that it has proudly announced to the country. It is the policy that it proudly takes to the Australian people. It is a policy for which it should be condemned,
a policy for which it should be utterly rejected by the Australian people. There is just no sense in it. There is no sense in the year one policy, and there is even less sense in the year two policy. Those policies are destructive of all of the progress that has been made under this Government.

The last thing that we need is the kind of alternative world that the Leader of the Opposition would take us into. It is no brave new world; it is a terrible world, a world in which people will be worse off, in which there will be more unemployment, more inflation and less progress than we are ever likely to see under this Government, which has been a government of enormous progress in terms of structural change and development of this nation.

Opposition members also say to us that they are a compassionate group, that they are people who are concerned about the unemployed. They keep telling us how concerned they are about the unemployed. But we know that the way they would go about cutting public expenditure is by slashing the unemployment benefit. The honourable member for Mayo (Mr Downer) and all the people on the other side know that is the case. They say they would save $750m by cutting the unemployment benefit, by stopping it after nine months and leaving people with the special benefit only if they were destitute. They would save three-quarters of a billion dollars just in that way, and with a whole lot of other attacks on the disabled and various other disadvantaged groups, such as sole parents. They have various other ways of attacking the unemployed.

The Opposition would slash social security benefits by about $1.12 billion. That is its approach. Honourable members opposite are supposed to be compassionate and concerned about the unemployed. They weep in their speeches about the plight of the unemployed, but their whole policy is to attack them and to create more of them through the macro-economic policies that they would produce.

We utterly reject Fightback and the kinds of policies which the Opposition has advocated to the Australian people. What we have in the Budget is a sound approach to the circumstances in which the nation finds itself at the present time. It provides a fiscal stimulus to raise the level of economic and employment growth. We do not hide that. It is a sensible thing to do in the current circumstances. It is not a fiscal stimulus that goes on into eternity; it is a fiscal stimulus which is there for this year and next year but which will fade away so that by year four it does not exist at all. Over that four-year period we will go from a fiscal stimulus of about $1.4bn in this year down to zero by 1995-96.

There is no structural impairment of the Budget. It is a very sensible, targeted approach to look after the unemployed through labour market programs, through some job creation programs, which are sensibly targeted to the regions of highest unemployment, and in various other respects it will not only produce jobs but also improve social infrastructure in housing, education and other areas. We do not shrink in any way from strong advocacy of that approach.

We are particularly able to make that fiscal stimulus because, unlike many other countries, we are not burdened by a massive government debt. Our government debt as a proportion of GDP is the lowest in the OECD. Therefore, we are able to produce a fiscal stimulus at this stage which adds to the deficit a little, but it is not something which is going to be damaging to this nation in the long term; in fact, it will be the opposite. It does not give us a crushing burden of government debt because debt is less now than it was when the Opposition was in power back in the early 1980s. Our government debt is at one of the lowest levels in the OECD. So we believe that we are able to produce that fiscal stimulus.

We have a deficit of 3.3 per cent of GDP. What is the position in various other countries? I mentioned the United Kingdom previously, which has a deficit of 4.6 per cent of GDP. Germany, a country which is the epitome of economic rectitude, this year has a deficit of 3½ per cent of GDP, slightly in advance of ours. The United States has a deficit of 6 per cent of GDP. Canada has a deficit of 4.6 per cent of GDP. So at 3.3 per
cent of GDP, our deficit is not large by the standards of comparable countries. In fact, it is less than any of them.

Against all this, therefore, the Budget policy which was put forward by the Treasurer (Mr Dawkins) on Tuesday night stands as a very sensible approach to the nation's present circumstances. It provides a stimulus to increase economic growth and employment. It provides compassionate concern for those people in the community who are most in need—the unemployed, the carers, the pensioners, the people who are currently on public hospital waiting lists, and various other groups, including, of course, Aborigines in response to the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody. Various other steps have been taken in this Budget to demonstrate and bring about improved benefits for people who are in need. Most of all, it is a Budget which suits the needs of the nation at the present time. (Time expired)

Mr McARTHUR (Corangamite) (8.18 p.m.)—The 1992-93 Keating-Dawkins Budget is the act of two desperate Monte Carlo gamblers who have nothing left to offer the banker except their last heap of chips that were purchased on credit. The Australian people should not fall for this Government's repeated promises that its big spending policies and an arrant disregard for our children and grandchildren by mortgaging the future will result in long term economic revival.

On 3 October, political retribution will be taken by the electors of Victoria against the irresponsible Kirner Government. The gross debt of $60 billion in unfunded liabilities will have to be tackled by the incoming coalition Government. It is in much the same way as the New South Wales Government is making the same responsible financial decisions about the debt that accumulated during the Wran Labor years in that State.

Labor's house of cards will further fall with the voters in Western Australia registering their displeasure at the horrendous problems that the interventionist Labor Government has brought upon that State. South Australia fares no better. Its State Bank fiasco should be a lesson to any future government in that State. By comparison, Queensland's prudent management by the former coalition Government has meant that the Goss Government is able to face the electors with that State's accounts in good shape.

Twenty-four hours after the Budget, even the former Prime Minister, Mr Hawke, criticised the fundamental Budget strategy that promised tax cuts to commence in 1994-95 would be paid for by future tax increases. The former Prime Minister also questioned the Budget's growth forecasts, which are a central plank of both the Budget figures and Australia's economic future.

Across the Tasman in New Zealand a worked example can be observed of a nation prepared to take hard decisions in changing its previous lack of export culture, altering its taxation regime and its industrial relations arrangements so that it is able to achieve a turnaround in its balance of payments. In Australia, the fundamental mistake of this Budget is a failure to confront economic policy issues facing the nation.

The Budget deficit is nominally $13.4 billion. However, a good case can be made that the real deficit is in the range of $20 billion. The asset sales figure of $1.6 billion is unlikely to be achieved. Superannuation commitments to Government trading enterprises have been left off the books. There has been an internal Reserve Bank dividend of $1 billion shown as a revenue item and the Government had one fewer service payday than was the case in the last financial year. Additionally, the AOTC has to pay a higher dividend. Has the Australian electorate been told the truth about the Government's true financial position, as the shadow Treasurer, the honourable member for Flinders (Mr Reith), has asked for so clearly over the last 24 hours?

Only six months ago the One Nation statement made a number of hopelessly optimistic predictions. Chief amongst these was the predicted growth rate of 4.75 per cent for 1992-93. The Treasurer (Mr Dawkins) now predicts that Australia will grow at only 3 per cent over the next 12 months. What businessman or commentator would believe this forecast? What evidence is there to
support such an important base figure in the Budget? Where is the upswing in productivity, the new investment, the rise in export prices, or the improvement in farm incomes which are a precondition for such growth?

The Government admits that the balance of payments current account deficit will be $15 billion and that fixed investment by business will increase only by a miserly two per cent. The annual cost of servicing the Commonwealth Government’s debt will increase by almost 28 per cent this year and 33 per cent in 1993-94. This is an indictment of the Government’s large borrowing program and deficit financing.

What farmers or private sector businesses would tolerate such large increases in their own borrowings, especially at a time when interest rates are at a relatively low point historically and the Government is already in hock to such a large degree? Not only are the Federal and State governments struggling to cope with mountains of debt, but Australia overall has a net foreign debt of $150 billion. These debt statistics focus the mind like a hangman’s noose on what might occur in the year 2000 if corrective action is not taken quickly here in Australia. Even with the free-spending policies of this Government, the Treasurer can only suggest that unemployment will decline by one percentage point to a level around 10 per cent this year.

The Government concedes that, of the one million unemployed, 300,000 are long term victims and therefore less likely to obtain employment. Professor Judy Sloan of Flinders University predicts that there will be 500,000 residual unemployed by 1995 if no policy changes occur. This is a tragic waste of Australia’s human resources.

The one encouraging aspect of the Budget statement is the prediction that inflation will run at 2 per cent. This is the only indicator to business shown anywhere within the Budget Papers that will encourage a rise in investment and confidence. Low inflation in turn assists in keeping interest rates lower and is the only signal to the employment markets that it might rise from its very low point at this stage.

As the Treasurer himself acknowledges at the beginning of his statement Working for the Future, unemployment has nearly doubled since mid-1989, although the level is really over one million persons, not just over 900,000 as claimed in that document. His statement points out that 65 per cent of the unemployed are under 35 years of age and that 65 per cent of people desiring full time work are males. The time people spend out of work rises with their age, to over a year if the individual is over 35. Interpreted in normal language, the older one is when out of work, the less chance one has of obtaining a job.

One of the Government’s knee-jerk responses to unemployment is its local area capital works program—something which has had a lot of attention in the Parliament this afternoon. It is a repeat of the RED scheme conjured up by the Whitlam Government and the CEP scheme conjured up by Prime Minister Hawke in the early years of his Government. This local government works program, administered by the Commonwealth Office of Local Government, will fail like its predecessors. The job creation schemes of previous governments have never resulted in sustainable long term jobs. Although an unemployed individual’s personal circumstances might be the same no matter where that person lives, the idea of the Minister for Family Support and Minister for Local Government (Mr Simmons) is that an unemployed person living in Apollo Bay, which is in my electorate and is part of the Shire of Otway, cannot be given a road building job, but a person living in Lorne might have a chance as it is in the Shire of Winchelsea, which received a funding allocation. As you would know, Mr Deputy Speaker, we have had a major debate about that today in regard to the Prime Minister’s electorate.

To be unemployed is as the word says: one is either employed or one does not have a job. There are no degrees of unemployment. I think the Minister fails to understand that very important concept. Why the Minister decided to introduce a condition that to qualify for funding a local government area had to have a recorded unemployment level
of one-half a per cent above the national average, except for those in category three, is beyond my understanding.

Local governments will also be expected to make a contribution of between 10 per cent and 20 per cent, either in cash or in kind. Most municipalities have not budgeted for this impost because they were not aware of the program before Budget night. They will also have great difficulty in deciding on the capital works projects that they must submit for analysis by their State municipal association by the stipulated date of 7 October this year.

History shows that these job creation schemes do not build worthwhile infrastructure projects for local government after these funds have been invested. The Treasurer is obviously so proud of these make-work schemes that he discusses the local capital works program on pages 51 to 53 of his Working for the Future statement. However, these paragraphs make no reference to the number of jobs to be created. For that we must turn to the very back of the statement, where the Treasurer says that employment effects cannot be estimated with precision and will generate around 13,000 jobs over two years.

It is quite remarkable that all this money will be spent to create only 13,000 jobs. That will be at a cost of $26,500 per job. At the end of two years when the $345m in funding dries up, how many sustainable jobs will have been created, I ask the Treasurer and the Prime Minister?

I agree with the Treasurer’s Working for the Future statement: Australia will advance if it has low inflation, a high underlying profit share, improved international cost and price competitiveness as well as a greater emphasis on Australia’s links through trade, particularly with Asia, and a commitment to higher productivity and quality improvement at the workplace level.

The coalition’s Fightback package lists these imperatives but, in addition, it contains a considered plan to achieve these aims. However, the Treasurer left out one key factor: the industrial relations system. The descriptions in Budget Paper No. 1 about workplace bargaining could have been written by a member of the New Right or the H.R. Nicholls Society. They refer to more flexible work practices, including hours of work, a team approach to organisations and employees undertaking a wider range of tasks, and a reduction in demarcation disputes.

Even the examples given support the coalition’s long held beliefs that there must be changes in industrial relations. For instance, the Sheraton Southgate Towers Hotel in Melbourne reached an agreement to annualise its penalty rates. This is set out in the Budget Papers. The ANZ and the National Bank introduced a more flexible working month—again an example cited in the Budget Papers. Email now has flexible working arrangements and a new team based working structure. ASTA at Avalon has initiated a workplace agreement involving more effective methods of work and management organisation.

John Halfpenny of the Trades Hall Council and Martin Ferguson of the ACTU need to be convinced that the trade union movement no longer has a privileged quasi-legal role in workplace negotiations and that the coalition’s more flexible approach to industrial relations and enterprise agreements is becoming conventional wisdom here in Australia. The era of the industrial relations club and of centralised wage fixing is drawing to a close in Australia. By the year 2000, management will be negotiating individual agreements with individual members of its own work force.

In the area of training, far too much attention is being paid to competency based training and the reports of former union official Laurie Carmichael. The Keating Government is increasing spending on entry level training, including prevocational full time training by over 80 per cent in 1991-92. This new push for the issuing of competency certificates, the establishment of competency recognition bodies and the enthusiasm for joint working parties about skills and entry level training may not match the direction in which Australia is headed. Who assesses the training, and who assesses the success of these competency based programs?

Is this insistence on competency based training merely a backdoor method of main-
taining union imposed awards in individual workplaces? Why is there not the same insistence that all these courses try to encourage critical thinking, or endeavour to nurture ethical but soundly based entrepreneurial business values? The Government should really be spending much more time investigating why some of our near Asian neighbours are able to match their economies' training facilities with the skills their countries require.

New Zealand provides a stark contrast with its change of policy direction—from a country that was bankrupt in 1984 to a nation which is internationally competitive and has confidence in the future. On the brink of a bailout by the IMF, radical changes were introduced to taxation, government operations and the level of subsidies to farmers. Sir Roger Douglas, as the Labour Minister of Finance, was instrumental in introducing such changes. A GST of 10 per cent was brought in which enabled income tax to be reduced from 66c in the dollar to 33c.

In July, I visited New Zealand with the shadow Treasurer, the honourable member for Flinders, and other coalition colleagues to observe at first hand the operation of its goods and services tax, the employment contracts Act and the economy in general. There was a universal view that the GST was fair and equitable and was working well as a tax mechanism. Some New Zealanders likened the change to a GST to the decimal currency conversion—no big deal. One key feature, however, was that New Zealanders now had an incentive to work hard because of the lower rates of income tax. The simplicity of the GST in New Zealand was emphasised by many people that I met, with its other distinguishing characteristic being that there are very few exemptions, a feature that everyone approved of.

The New Zealand experience confirmed my view that Fightback, the economic and taxation reform package put forward so ably by the Leader of the Opposition tonight, is eminently sensible and the only way to go about restoring a balanced taxation system and restoring incentive to individual workers in the Australian context. The employment contracts Act in New Zealand was a benchmark piece of legislation, introduced by the Bolger national Government, which ensured that management negotiated with its own employees. From all accounts, the effect has been most beneficial to workers and their industries. There is a much greater awareness of the need for cooperation and that each industry must be able to compete internationally for both its survival and the future of New Zealand.

One food processing company was faced with closure. Under the new contracts Act, a seven-day week was instituted, with one group of workers operating a three-day and the other a four-day shift. The factory remains open and is exporting its processed products at internationally competitive prices. By contrast, in Australia, this Budget includes the recent agrifood industry initiative, but much of the $1.9m in funding goes to set up an agrifood council—an example of wasteful bureaucracy, not addressing the fundamental problems that have been dealt with in New Zealand.

PDL Industries, which we looked at in Christchurch, identified the competitive nature of their work force compared with the Victorian situation. In New Zealand, for every $1 in wages there is 17c in on-costs. In Victoria, the comparable extra expenditure is 51c in on-costs. As a consequence, the Victorian factory was closed. It was obvious to those visiting New Zealand that its economy is on the move. Reforms had taken place on the waterfront and in the post office and Telecom. A new taxation regime was in place and working well. Industrial relations have been fundamentally changed. Business has confidence to invest and to look constantly to export opportunities. There is no debate about tariffs or any protection to farmers or manufacturers. Government paid agricultural subsidies to farmers have been removed since 1987. The New Zealand Government and its people have made the bold policy changes while Australia continues to walk away from fundamental reform.

Not only has this Budget increased spending by $5 billion more than was suggested by this Government only six months ago; it has also heralded the prospect of further tax
increases to pay for the so-called taxation cuts promised last February. The Prime Minister may well consider this Budget to be the one that brings home the bacon for his electoral prospects, but for more than one million unemployed or underemployed this document strips away any hope of Australia offering them or their families a sustainable job in the year ahead.

Mr COURTICE (Hinkler) (8.35 p.m.)—The first time I ever heard a speech like that brought down tonight by the Leader of the Opposition (Dr Hewson) was when I was first read to by my grandfather, when he read Charles Dickens to me. Nothing much has changed. Charles Dickens represented what happened in industrial England in the last century. The attitude of the conservatives on the other side of the House and, indeed, across this country, has not changed. It does give me great strength and satisfaction to know that today, in 1992, the tories are the same as they were 100 years ago. They have not changed; they are butlers for the rich. They do not have any compassion. They do not have any vision for this country, but they do represent one thing that is quite clear, and that is greed.

It is interesting to note that we heard tonight from the Leader of a party—the Liberal Party—that wanted to sell Telecom to Alan Bond and wanted to make John Elliott Prime Minister of this country. In the last Parliament we heard from those opposite that we needed people such as John Elliott who had success in business and would know how to run this country. Well, we know how well he went, do we not? He was President of the Liberal Party. As I have said, nothing has changed.

We heard from the Leader of the Opposition tonight that he wanted to give us the tax rates of Hong Kong; he wanted to show us how Hong Kong works. The corporate tax rate in Hong Kong is $16.5% per cent. He wants to give Australians a corporate tax of 42 per cent, so it is quite clear that he does not understand the tax regime in Hong Kong; but he does understand, I am sure—or he should do—that Hong Kong is actually going to be part of China in a couple of years time. Perhaps he is thinking more about the industrial relations attitude that exists in China or the structure of society that exists in China. But he has certainly got his facts wrong when it comes to the tax rate. He has got his facts wrong when he says that we have a high tax rate in this country. We have the second lowest level of tax of the OECD. Only the United States, of all the OECD nations, has a lower tax regime than us, and the United States does not have a social welfare structure as we do. If people cannot understand that, they need only to get the footage that we saw of the Los Angeles riots, the catalyst for which was the lack of social justice that we have seen in America under the years of Republicans—hopefully that will end when Clinton becomes President—where the rich have been looked after, the tax breaks have gone to the rich, and social justice and welfare, under Reagan and certainly under this President, have gone out the door.

So if we look at all the other countries of the OECD, we find they have a higher level of tax. Yet, at the same time, we have the best repatriation system in the world—second to none. It is a repatriation system that is the model for every country to be guided by, and we appropriate over $5 billion per annum for our veterans.

We have the best pension system in the world. We have the best system with regard to the family allowance supplement, Austudy, child-care and, as the Prime Minister (Mr Keating) and the Treasurer (Mr Dawkins) said, over and over again, in answers to questions in the House today at Question Time, over the last 10 years this Government has brought about social justice and equity and brought down the tax scale at the same time. The top tax rate is down from 60c to 47c, and of course the bottom rate of tax is now 21 per cent. What is the Opposition going to do with the bottom rate of tax? We hear it talk so much about looking after the low income earners. The first thing the Opposition is going to do is to reduce it from 21 to 16 per cent. Then it is going to put a tax of 15 per cent on everything those people consume, on every service that those people buy. If one considers that low income workers
are lucky to save more than $10 a week, they will be paying 31c in the dollar, not the 21c they pay now.

When they take any money that they do put in the bank out of the bank to spend on anything, at any time down the track, they will pay that 15 per cent. So, in essence, they will be paying 31c in the dollar, not 21c in the dollar. It seems that that is something that the Opposition does not understand. Those opposite do not understand it because they do not come from the average working families in this country. They do not understand that the majority of the income from working families goes to pay for bread and butter, education and for the basic necessities of life, the very things—every basic necessity in good or service—that those opposite intend to tax at 15 per cent.

From the previous speaker, the honourable member for Corangamite (Mr McArthur), we heard comments about how well New Zealand is going. Let me say, as has been said in this House over the last week, that New Zealand has fewer people in work now than it had 10 years ago. We have 1¼ million more people in work now than we had 10 years ago. I will tell honourable members where the majority of New Zealanders are going: they are coming here to Australia to live and to work—288,000 of them. I will tell honourable members why they are doing that: because in this country we have an award system and a system of wages and social justice that they admire. They are running away from a tory government in New Zealand that lacks compassion, that lacks understanding and that is simply playing to the rich, as are those on the other side of the House.

I have just explained the Opposition's proposal to drop the rate of tax for low income earners to 16 per cent while putting a 15 per cent tax on top. Those opposite have the audacity to say that under that proposal low income earners will be better off, even in the short term. But what those opposite have not told the people is that under their industrial relations policy, and under voluntary agreements, no Australian worker will know what he will take home because that will be dependent upon the employer. Some-one out there in the workplace today who is protected by an award, who perhaps is earning $24,000 or $26,000, may well find, under the Opposition's industrial relations system, that he is taking home $22,000. Of course, we know what young people, those who are leaving school at 15, will get—$3 an hour.

It was only two weeks ago that the Opposition's shadow Minister for industrial relations, the honourable member for Ben­nelong (Mr Howard), got involved in the shearing dispute and said that workers should be freely able to work at any time, however they like. If one interprets that in simple Oxford English terms, one would determine that he is saying that there should not be any award protection or any conditions whatsoever—no independent umpire that Australians have come to know, whether it be in sport or through the Industrial Relations Commission. It would simply take us back 100 years to the law of the jungle, take us back to where big is great, might is right and the blokes who are working in the sawmills and the women who are working in the shops and the kids who are working at McDonald's will have to take what they are given with no recourse whatsoever, no award protection whatsoever.

At the present time in this country the award system is the base rate. If that is abolished we will get the China syndrome that the Leader of the Opposition was talking about. It will put us back 100 years, and those opposite well know it. If they do not, they ought to go to the Parliamentary Library, get a few books out and read our history.

We have heard from the Opposition about the waterfront. In regard to the waterfront, I would like to make the point that this Government is the only government that has ever tackled the problem. Not only has it tackled the problem. I am very pleased to say that over the last few years the shipping reforms have seen the average crew size reduced from 33 in 1983 to 21 currently, which is the average for OECD countries; and the seafaring work force has been reduced by around 20 per cent. That is without industrial disputation; that is by maintaining an indepen-
dent umpire—not by using a stick and not by dividing Australians.

Over one-third of the Australian fleet has been replaced in the last five years with larger, more efficient and technologically advanced ships. Part of reducing manning levels is to have ships with technology on them so as to have fewer men manning those ships. If those opposite think they can reduce manning levels with old technology they will simply put the ships onto rocks and run them into lighthouses. In 1991 only 38 shipping days were lost to industrial disputes, compared with 1,593 under the former Liberal Government. I think that quite clearly demonstrates the difference in attitude and success. I could go further in regard to the shipping industry.

We heard the Leader of the Opposition use 1970 as a benchmark to criticise the Government. From 1949 to 1972 we had a conservative government in this country, and they were years of lost opportunity. At a time when we had wool at £1 a pound, a time when we had the resources boom, there was no vision from the other side of the House. Of course, the Leader of the Opposition talked about knocking this great country. It is those on this side of the House who have demonstrated pride in our country. We do not grovel to the British; we do not want to grovel to the British. Those opposite do. But I would suggest that should they go over to England to try to sell them some wool, wheat, beef or sugar, they will find out how much they are thought of.

Given that we are talking about knocking the country, I mention that as a Queenslander I grew up in a State that has a very good memory of how good honourable members opposite were in World War II when their hero, Robert Menzies, put a red line through Brisbane and was quite prepared to surrender the State of Queensland to the Japanese. Of course, we had a tory government in Queensland for 23 years that did just that.

To move to what I think is a very relevant issue in regard to Fightback, I refer to the effect it has had on rural Australia. Only recently the National Farmers Federation commissioned a company, ACIL, to investigate the effects of Fightback, the taxation changes, on farm expenditure, receipts and income. ACIL was given four models to use: mixed grain and wool; dry land dairy; merino wool; and Queensland beef. The four net incomes used were $60,800; $55,950; $58,700 and $71,102. I stress that they are net incomes which were used to demonstrate that Fightback is beneficial to rural Australia.

But there is a problem with that. Rural Australia is in crisis, and has been for quite some time. In the last three years I have not met a farmer who is earning net that sort of money. I would be surprised if anyone on the other side of this House has met a farmer who is earning that money. There is no doubt that some of the landed gentry would be earning it, and there is no doubt that some large company farms would be earning that sort of money, but not the average farmer.

It is interesting to note that in all of the tables presented I have not found taken into account, as a cost or consideration, interest or redemption. So one has to assume that all the farmers in this country are out of debt and are earning between $55,000 and $70,000, the basis of the analysis upon which the National Farmers Federation and the technocrats from the NFF—who live and work in Canberra and who spend more time going from restaurant to restaurant in Manuka than on a farm—base their arguments. They have the audacity to use those four examples as the way in which Fightback will affect rural Australia. They then come out and endorse a shonky tax package with a shonky report.

It puts great pressure on the credibility of ACIL. I believe ACIL is credible, but certainly the shabby way in which the NFF put forward four groups after arguing for two years that we had a crisis in rural Australia with farmers losing income is an insult to anyone’s intelligence. I would like to take the matter further, and I would like to quote from ACIL. ACIL said:

It can be seen from Table 7 that the removal of assistance to agriculture, manufacturing and mining will produce a net gain for agriculture and a decline in manufacturing. At first sight the gain to agriculture looks to be relatively low. This is because it also reflects the negative impact on to the more protected rural industries.
It goes on to say:

The export oriented broadacre industries stand to benefit the most. While the sector as a whole gains, there will be losers within the sector.

I think it is incumbent upon me to challenge ACIL—I have already challenged the National Farmers Federation, but it does not have the integrity, courage or decency to do so—to name the farmers and industries within its own commissioned report who will be the losers. Surely if ACIL wants to maintain any credibility it will come forward and identify which industries in rural Australia will be the losers under Fightback. In that report commissioned by the National Farmers Federation, paid for by farmers' money, it clearly says that some farm industries will be losers.

That is a challenge that ought to be taken up and answered, at least by ACIL, if the National Farmers Federation is not prepared to do so. It is interesting to note in table 4.1 of Fightback, under ‘Reform—Rural and manufacturing assistance (IC)’, that the matters to be involved will be the ‘elimination of tariff, quota and bounty assistance’. In the sugar industry, with which I am associated, that means the implementation of the Industry Commission report, something that National Party members in this House have consistently denied, particularly the honourable member for Dawson (Mr Braithwaite), who is still denying it. He has a problem understanding what is in the IC report or with uttering the truth—one or the other. The Industry Commission report in relation to sugar recommends—and I have quoted from table 4.1—the abolition of tariffs, the abolition of acquisition, the abolition of pooling and the privatisation of bulk terminals.

Over the past six months we have heard the National Party on this issue deny in total those very points. Every time the Leader of the National Party of Australia (Mr Tim Fischer) goes to Queensland he runs around in circles. He weasels his way through every answer. He will not give a definitive answer on those points. If he is not prepared to do that he should have the courage to come out and say he is opposed to those parts of Fightback. But that is what Fightback says, quite clearly and unambiguously.

The other thing that Fightback says it will do to benefit rural Australia and Australia as a whole is to abolish several taxes: to abolish wholesale sales tax, for which farmers already have exemptions; to abolish payroll tax, which farmers do not pay; to abolish the excise on petroleum products—farmers use diesel; and to abolish the coal export duty. I think most farmers would be pretty happy about the abolition of the coal export duty, but I do not know any farmers who export coal!

The Opposition wants to abolish the training guarantee charge at a time when most countries understand the need to be a cleverer country, the need to put more energies and resources into reskilling and improving the skills of our work force. We have the Opposition wanting to give the young people a $3 minimum wage and abolish a training system that is going to make us a wiser, better and cleverer country. Of course, the Opposition is going to increase the excise on tobacco products by 25 per cent. So when the farmers are totally frustrated with having to absorb those taxes and the effect of the abolition of all the issues I have mentioned, particularly in relation to sugar, and roll themselves a smoke, they will have to pay 25 per cent more for the pleasure.

This country has a clear choice in relation to policy and the economy: a clear choice whether to maintain universal health cover; a clear choice whether to subscribe to destroying award conditions that Australian men and women have fought for for 100 years and which have been the envy of the working men and women right across the world—and I go back to the New Zealand experience that has forced 288,000 of them to come to this country—or whether to maintain the systems we have. It is not a very hard choice.

I would suggest that those opposite go and talk to pensioners and ask them whether they want to pay 15 per cent extra for bread, milk, meat, fruit and vegetables and whether they really believe that Australians should be taxed every day of their lives from the cradle to the grave, because that is all the Opposition has to offer. As I have said many times before:
Thursday, 20 August 1992

REPRESENTATIVES

those opposite are not servants of the people; they are butlers for the rich.

Mr MILES (Braddon) (8.54 p.m.)—The honourable member for Hinkler (Mr Courtice) has just said that Australians want to keep the system we have. I want to say to Australians who are listening to this broadcast of Parliament that the system we have is one which has created one million unemployed and another million out there not doing the job they want to do or who are without the work they would like to have. The Government has increased its overseas debt from $33 billion to $180 billion in nine years. It is incredible, when one thinks out about it, that the average debt for every man, woman and child in this country in 1983 was $2,000. It is now over $12,000. It took us 81 years to get up to the $2,000, and in the last nine years it has skyrocketed to $12,000 for every man, woman and child. That is the system that the Labor Party wants to keep. In other words, it is going to go to the Australian people and say, ‘More of the same, everybody; just the dead weight of government. You are going to have another decade of the dead weight of overblown government in this country’.

I can remember coming into this Parliament in 1984, when the rhetoric was this: how terrible it was that the Forward Estimates of the last Fraser Government were something like $9 billion. The actual debt that year was $4½ billion. This year we have a debt of $13.4 billion. Do Australians want more of the same—overblotted, overspending government? I do not think they do. Yet the Government has the temerity to come in here and try to argue the case that Australia would be better off under another Labor administration.

We do not have to go very far to assess the value and the merits of this particular Budget, but I want to run through some of the headlines in the newspapers yesterday. In the Australian we saw the headline ‘Jobs now but taxes later’—an interesting headline, indicating to people that, yes, the Government is going to an election, so it wants to get people off the dole queues if at all possible, but it will have to work out how to pay for it later on. I will say a little more about that later. The Sun-Herald carried the headline ‘Jobs at a price’; the Sydney Morning Herald, ‘Labor’s $13 billion repair job’. I wonder why it called it a repair job. One does not usually have to repair a car or a vehicle if it is in good shape. But clearly the Sydney Morning Herald regards the Australian economy as being in bad shape. It has broken down; the wheels have fallen off. So it was regarded as a repair job, costing $13 billion. A headline in the Age read, ‘Dawkins gambles on jobs’—throwing the last dice. We have a government that is bereft of ideas; not setting about a comprehensive plan for Australia and recognising the real problems, addressing those issues rationally, systematically, thoughtfully, compassionately—not at all. It was a gamble.

So we find around the country journalist after journalist, headline after headline, regarding this Budget as a gamble—a gamble for Australia’s future. The Telegraph Mirror carried the headline ‘Labor’s $1 billion job gamble’; and the Financial Review, ‘The Government stakes $3.5 billion to save the bacon’. So we have it: a very despondent, despairing scenario. Not only do we have the journalists saying this. In the Australian we find the headline ‘Hawke criticises Budget strategy’. Not the coalition Leader; not a Liberal leader, not the National Party and not a State Premier, but the person who was Prime Minister of Australia at this stage last year, the person who administered this country for eight years and created the mayhem. It was not us. But here he is criticising the Prime Minister (Mr Keating) and the Budget which has just been brought in. He said:

It was terribly ambitious to promise tax cuts in 1994-95. The business community now has hanging over its head suggestions of future tax increases to pay for tax cuts.

It is incredible. Here we have a government bringing a Budget in for the Australian people, in absolutely desperate times, and saying, ‘We are going to give you tax cuts, we promise tax cuts, and we are going to fund them, but we are not going to tell you that we have to increase taxes to do it’.
The basis on which this Government has put together this Budget is absolutely ludicrous. The article in the Australian goes on to say this about Mr Hawke’s criticism: . . . echoed the Opposition’s attack on the Budget, which targeted the credibility of the Government’s medium-term strategy and its admission that it may levy new taxes if re-elected.

There we have the former Prime Minister, the man who was Prime Minister here only 12 months ago, saying that the Government may have to levy new taxes if re-elected. The article continues:

The Treasurer, Mr Dawkins, was repeatedly unable to give assurances yesterday that people relying on fixed-interest incomes—particularly pensioners—would not face a cut in their incomes in the mid 1990s under the Budget’s tax options, which might be required to reduce the deficit.

In other words, we have the Treasurer of this country not willing to be up-front and tell the Australian people—even the pensioners, the people who are least able to do anything about their circumstances because of their stage in life—that they might be taxed in the future to get Australia out of its economic circumstances.

This Budget is a tragedy for Australia. Tonight the Leader of the Opposition (Dr Hewson) outlined very forcefully the problems with which we are faced. I was interested to listen to the honourable member for Hinkler, because he was not defending the Budget; he was actually talking about the Fightback package. He did not have the courage, because he did not have the information, to argue a case for the Budget which was brought down two days ago. It shows up time and time again in the way in which Government members at the moment are approaching debate in this Parliament. They are not arguing the case for their policies; they are just trying to attack the coalition’s policies.

It has shown up not only here in debate in the Parliament but also in the types of letters and information which they are directing to the electorate. Instead of talking about the major issues of concern in this country, they are sending letters to constituents about how they can put fire detectors in their homes. It is amazing to think that Federal members are writing letters suggesting to people that they might go out and buy fire detectors to put in their homes. They are the issues on which the Government is trying to claw back credibility amongst the constituents of Australia.

The fundamental issues in this Budget were not addressed. Australia does have some problems. Why does the Government not honestly face up to the issues of industrial relations and the waterfront? I admit that there have been changes on the waterfront, but a lot more has to happen. Why is it more expensive to ship material from Melbourne to Devonport in Tasmania than from Melbourne to Los Angeles? Why on earth has the Government not done something about it over the last nine years? It is not willing to tackle its union mates. It is not willing to take them on and change the system for the betterment of all Australians.

Why has the Government not tackled transport costs like the coalition has in the Fightback package? Under the Fightback program there is a 19c a litre reduction in the price of fuel for all Australians. That is a significant reduction in the transport costs of this country. We are a widely dispersed nation, with people living thousands of kilometres apart. Transport costs are an expensive part of living in this nation of ours, great nation as it is. But the Government has not been prepared to tackle those costs. Why has the Government not tackled areas of deep concern to Australia, such as the economic circumstance? Our huge overseas debt is not being addressed at all. Our balance of payments is totally out of range. We are going into debt $15 billion each year, and that figure goes up all the time.

It is not only on the economic or industrial relations side of Australia; it is also on the social side. Only two days ago I was speaking in the Parliament about how this is the first time in Australia’s history that a government has been prepared to recognise homosexual relationships as equivalent to marriage. That is the sort of social society this Government would like to introduce. I commended Government members for withdrawing that section of a Bill—but they did it only after
pressure from the coalition. Is that the sort of legislation we want in this country?

Do we want a million people unemployed? The Government argues about a $3 an hour wage for young people. At the moment, they get nothing. There are not even jobs out there. What about the devastation that has been caused to Australians through the loss of self-esteem and dignity? In Australia, somebody who earns about $18,000 and has two dependent children and a dependent spouse is actually better off being on the dole. It puts many Australians in an invidious situation. The Government gives the breadwinners of such families a choice. They can go to work and maintain their dignity by working for a wage and take home less pay than if they went on the dole. They have to make a choice. Do they maintain their dignity and have less money for their families or do they give up their jobs and have more money? No doubt that is the system the honourable member for Hinkler wants to keep. I do not believe that is the system most Australians want to have in this country.

We are in a run down to an election. We have members of the Government saying that it is more of the same. There is no vision, nothing new at all. The Fightback package, which has been out there now for almost a year, puts a clear choice before Australians.

I will illustrate another social side of Australia at the moment. Somebody who is earning $25,000 a year and has two children and a dependent spouse, has a disposable income of about $20,000 after tax if the family stays together. If circumstances arise such that members of the family separate, the benefits they get from the Government actually increase that disposable income by $7,500. In other words, a family which separates can get an extra $150 per week. Is that the sort of social framework we want to have in this country? I say it is not. I say that what we need in a country are financial incentives for families to stay together, not to break up. The financial incentive does not have to be much, but at least it should be positive enough to encourage mums and dads to stay together.

In Australia, 80 per cent of poverty amongst children is in single parent families. That is where the poverty is being created. It is a great tragedy, because out of that comes many other problems; for example, delinquency. It would be interesting to know the cost of vandalism for our local government councils around Australia. In this Budget, $235m is going to local councils, and probably all it will do is mend the vandalism.

I want to make a few other points on industrial relations because there is going to be a vigorous campaign at the next election. This is part of a system this Government wants to keep. The alleged industrial dispute will be dealt with by Commissioner Maher at 11 a.m. on Monday, 24 August 1992 at Nauru House, 80 Collins Street, Melbourne. This is the type of absolute arrant nonsense that is going on in this area now. This is the demand by the Transport Workers Union of Australia:

1. Weekly wage rates
   A minimum of $2,000.00 per week for all employees.

And, not only that, the claim also includes:

2. Extra Payments
   A minimum of $200.00 per week in addition to all other payments.

Just imagine it—$2,000 a week! Those on the other side are going to say, 'This is just one of these silly ambit claims. It doesn't really mean anything'. Let us look at the ambit claims that are being made:

3. District and Divisional Allowance
   A minimum of $200.00 a week in addition to all other payments.

6. Special Rates
   A minimum of $200.00 per week in addition to all other payments.

How many hours a week? Hours are specified as 30 hours a week. And so the claim goes on.

We have this facade of a system in Australia where highly paid people go into courts, which are operating in expensive rental accommodation, to argue these types of cases. This is a system that this Government wants to keep. It is not a system which is going to create productivity in this country, because it is archaic and out of date. It was set up in 1904 and it is time that it was
changed. The coalition will bring in a flexible system which will give employees a choice.

The operations of APPM are carried out in my electorate. There is no doubt that many people would have noticed the dispute on TV a few weeks ago. I say again to this House: the amount of intimidation brought to bear on the families of people who wanted to go to work was just incredible. A former trade union shop steward in one of the mines, who is now working in the plant, told me about the intimidation. He said, 'I will not leave my house, my wife or my children without another man in the house. Not only that, I have made sure that I will protect myself. I have bought a shotgun which I keep under the bed'. That is a former union official.

Literally dozens of people have rung my office reporting cases of intimidation. For example, a person was out doing some fencing to fill in time because they were all on strike. For the third time, a union official came to him and said, 'The next time I come, I will break your legs'. Housewives have rung me frequently and said, 'I was woken up at 1 o'clock this morning. The person said, "I hope your house is insured because if you leave it, it mightn't be there tomorrow"'. This went on day after day, night after night.

This is the type of intimidation that exists in the industrial framework that the Labor Government wants to keep. I believe that men and women who want to work should have the right to work. I believe that men and women who want to go on strike should have the right to go on strike, but they should not have the right to stop another person going to work and earning some bread for their family.

We will bring in an industrial relations system which for the first time in Australia's history will give freedom, choice and freedom of association. I believe that is long overdue in this great country of ours. Unfortunately, my time has run out. I could say a lot about this Budget. This Budget is archaic for the times; it gives no vision. It is only under a Fightback program that we will find Australia will be put back on the rails. (Time expired)

Mr SCIACCA (Bowman—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Social Security) (9.14 p.m.)—I have listened to the contributions of the honourable member for Braddon (Mr Miles) and the Leader of the Opposition (Dr Hewson). The Leader of the Opposition took about five minutes to reply to the Budget and 25 minutes to tell us how great his Fightback proposals are. He virtually bagged this country uphill and downhill. That does not augur well; it does not do any credit to the Leader of the Opposition.

The honourable member for Braddon says that those of us on this side of the House continually divert our attention to the Fightback proposals. We do this because we believe that if ever the Opposition were allowed to bring in those scorched earth policies provided in the Fightback package, this country, unfortunately, would be worse off than it has been over the last 12 months because of the recession.

The Budget delivered by the Treasurer (Mr Dawkins) on Tuesday night carries with it the onerous task of lifting the hopes and aspirations of the Australian people. I could not possibly envisage that there would be many people, regardless of their political leanings and regardless of what was said by the Opposition Leader tonight, in this place who would seriously like to see it fail. Too many people have suffered for too long during this recession, which has—albeit slowly—faded in its intensity over the past 12 months.

Yet it has become apparent to all and sundry that there are sections of the Opposition—their ideological zealotry far outweighs their genuine concern for average Australians—who would seek to talk the economic recovery down and bag Australia. One can often see them on the other side of the House literally hoping that things will get worse just so that they can get a crack at constructing their free market nirvana—a magical place, I am told, where governments would do nothing, affluent people would pay little or no tax and average Australians would have their future livelihood mortgaged, so that the minions of the coalition leadership can gloat over graphs and charts that are aesthetically pleasing.

It is not simply that the Opposition has policies decidedly different from that of the
Government. In a democracy that is to be expected and, I guess, encouraged. However, the Opposition’s plan for Australia transcends mere policy differentiation with the Government. Its blind faith in the invisible hand that watches over and guides all economic and social activity is dangerous and dogmatic to the extreme. We on this side of the House fear that the Opposition’s invisible hand is intended to grasp firmly around the neck of ordinary Australians.

One need only look at the consumption tax, the goods and services tax, to see that the whole burden of wealth in this country would be shifted from the small people—the people on incomes less than $35,000 to $40,000 a year—to those who have money. I am forced to draw these conclusions because I am constantly awe-struck by the assertions of the Leader of the Opposition that government spending should be cut by some $10 billion. It is an absolutely preposterous notion that he has put forward. The scary thing about it is that I believe he truly means it. It is not an idea that he propagates simply to convince people that he remains faithful to his beloved credo. It is a very real and genuine intent on his part should a catastrophe befall this country and the coalition attains government.

With unemployment at the levels we are currently experiencing, in my opinion it was entirely responsible and desirable that the Government employ modest spending measures in the Budget designed to invigorate the economy. It is the correct thing to do in the context of our present economic situation. In the late 1980s during a period of high growth it was appropriate to generate Budget surpluses, an achievement that this Government remains proud of, but it is an achievement which we will not dwell upon now. It is a logical proposition that different economic circumstances dictate that different economic measures are required to overcome our problems.

Why does the Opposition want to rip $10 billion out of the budgetary process? It would contend that this expenditure is crowding out private activity and that its removal would generate a far larger proportion of private expenditure and investment. If we allow the Opposition a substantial degree of leeway in this prediction, it would still require the most phenomenal leap of faith by even the most ardent of economic rationalists to believe that this reduction in Commonwealth outlays would be immediately replicated and/or increased by the private sector. With interest rates and inflation at historically low levels, the private sector is still displaying a degree of apprehension towards investment. It is utterly apparent to all concerned, except the Opposition, that the economy and the nation itself needs a stimulus. This will not occur through tearing the heart out of the Budget, through taxing food and clothing or through ‘big bang’ industrial relations policies.

In the Opposition’s Fightback package of 600 or 700 pages all one will see on industrial relations is half a page. Whilst it is supposed to be the Opposition’s big platform and the centrepiece of its Fightback package, it dedicates only half of one page to it. It is obvious what those opposite want to do; they want to cause confrontation in this country. The honourable member for Braddon said that there were scares at the APPM dispute, but there will be a lot more under the sorts of policies that those opposite want to bring in.

The stimulus will be achieved through careful and considerate budgetary expenditure which targets those in our community who are in most need and which puts money in people’s pockets—money that will be spent in our towns and cities thus generating further economic activity and building on and improving consumer and business confidence.

I turn now to the speech by the Leader of the Opposition. He had the audacity to say that the local government capital works program is somehow a pork-barrelling exercise.

Mr McArthur interjecting—

Mr SCIACCA—That is an absolutely ridiculous statement. I will give honourable members an example. The seat of Moreton in Brisbane gets nothing and it is the most marginal Labor seat in Queensland. Indeed, the whole of the Brisbane area, which has seven Labor-held seats, gets $3.6m. We can contrast that with the area of the Gold Coast, which is covered by the honourable member
for McPherson (Mr Bradford)—a safe Liberal seat, I would say—and the honourable member for Moncrieff (Mrs Sullivan), also a safe Liberal seat. It gets $13m. Yours truly gets nothing. The point I am making is that if Opposition members go through all of the lists they will find that they did every bit as good as anybody else in this regard. Some people, like all of my Brisbane colleagues and I, got nothing out of it. If this was political pork-barrelling it certainly was not much of an attempt at it.

The Opposition's plan to reduce government expenditure at this crucial stage in our recovery is sheer folly and will attract nothing but a sense of incredulity from the wider public. The Leader of the Opposition is obviously deluded and he should seek counsel from the learned and popular Australian hero Jeff Fenech who would surely advise him that one does not lean into a left hook. That is exactly what the Leader of the Opposition is doing.

The comparison must be drawn between the Government's compassionate and responsible reaction to our economic circumstances and the Opposition's dogmatic and deluded belief that soothsayer Hewson and oracle Reith will pull a loaves and fishes caper after stripping the Budget bare. Essentially, what we have is the real versus the illusory. The difficulty in assessing what impact the Opposition's expenditure cuts would have on the Australian people is that its position on this issue is in a constant state of flux.

Therefore, we must fear the worst and assume that no area of the Budget would be sacred. This would be particularly the case in terms of the compassionate measures and initiatives in the Budget that are targeted towards helping those in our community who are most in need and who are most likely to utilise additional assistance immediately. We must ask ourselves this question: what section of the community which benefited from this Budget could possibly consider itself safe from the Opposition's Budget-sla\shing sabre? The obvious answer to that is that no-one should feel secure.

I would be particularly concerned if I were a pensioner, because in this Budget there are measures that will help to improve quality of life for pensioners, all of which would be placed in jeopardy should the Opposition get the chance to pillage the Budget. Not only could they stand to lose these hard fought for gains, but also they would be hammered into submission by a 15 per cent goods and services or consumption tax.

I now turn the House's attention to the changes to pensioners' entitlements announced in the Budget. From 28 January 1993 the standard rate of pension will increase by $6 a fortnight for single pensioners and $5 a week each for married couples. This increase will apply to age pensioners, sole parent pensioners, disability support pensioners, allowees with dependants, and older long term recipients of employment benefit. This increase is expected to ensure that the pension stays at or above 25 per cent of average weekly earnings throughout 1992-93—a long term commitment of this Labor Government. When those opposite were in government I think the highest they got to was 22 per cent.

To many of us in this House, because of our salaries, this pension increase would not seem like much money, and of course we would all like the increase to be higher if there were no budgetary constraints. But I can state quite confidently that for most pensioners—and you have a lot of pensioners in your electorate as well, Mr Deputy Speaker—any increase is gladly accepted.

I pride myself on the fact that I have a great many age pensioners in my electorate. I am also very proud of the fact that I have been able to develop a fair degree of empathy with them over the years. I see them on pension day at the shops, carefully calculating their expenditure and dividing their pension up into amounts down to the last cent for rent, groceries, bills, transport and whatever small amount is left over for modest entertainment. To them, an extra $5 or $6 will go a long way. We should never forget in this place how hard it is for some pensioners to get by and wherever possible we should strive to help improve their quality of life—which of course would be impossible in the event that the lot on the other side got up.
In addition to the increase in the pension, from 1 April 1993 all full and part rate pensioners and older long term benefit recipients will be eligible for the full range of Commonwealth fringe benefits associated with the health benefits card, including hearing aids and telephone allowances. There are also some national rail concessions. Once again, these savings for pensioners do not represent large amounts of money if one is a high salary earner, but, in the case of the telephone rental concession, for a pensioner it could easily mean the difference between being able to pay or not being able to pay a telephone bill. These two modest, yet important, expenditure measures are entirely representative of the Government’s commitment to helping those in our communities who are in the most need.

On the other hand, the Opposition would, without adequate compensation, add on a 15 per cent tax for pensioners every time they bought groceries, got a haircut, caught a bus, bought clothing or had their lawn mowed. But it does not stop there. The ominous message from the Opposition concerning its intention to wreak havoc on the Budget deficit would mean that these sorts of compassionate measures would be cast asunder. Pensioners would have nothing to look forward to under a coalition Government other than prolonged and compounded austerity.

It is always interesting to note what the intentions of the Opposition are in terms of the Government’s labour market programs. Its intentions seem to be very clear. One only had to listen to what the Leader of the Opposition said here tonight. Those opposite intend to slash and burn any program which seeks to help the long term unemployed access on-the-job training and help in their transition to full time employment. Once again, the Opposition’s ‘magic pudding’ style theories would come into play. The house of cards that it would erect in place of the Government’s positive and productive programs would be totally inadequate to cope with the vagaries and complexities associated with long term unemployment.

Tens of thousands of Australians would be left languishing after the Opposition applied the death of a thousand cuts to these programs. Jobs and training positions are supposed to appear magically after the introduction of the consumption tax on everything, and the Opposition’s award-crushing industrial relations manifesto would evidently help that. What will the Leader of the Opposition say to these people after he has taken away their dignity and hope and the jobs just do not appear? I expect it will be a case of ‘let them eat cake’.

The fact is that the long term unemployed do not have the luxury of being able to wait around for those magical jobs and opportunities to appear. They want, and need, assistance now. The Government is providing that assistance through the most extensive and comprehensive range of labour market programs assembled by any OECD country. It is an entirely appropriate list of programs which prioritises retraining and the provision of work experience for the long term unemployed. The Government has allocated $1.15 billion in funding to achieve this goal—almost double the expenditure for 1991-92. We have cast a wide net to take in and assist the majority of young people and mature age unemployed. We will not sit idly by and let these Australians wither away as the Opposition would. It is the Government’s responsibility to be proactive in the area of unemployment, and that is exactly what we are doing.

To illustrate this point there are positive measures which will create jobs: Jobskill, 10,050 places; Jobstart, 104,000 places; Jobtrain, 98,000 places; Skillshare, an additional 117,000 places; land care and environmental action plan, which will provide young people with employment experience in environment and conservation projects, 6,000 places; Job Search training, 40,000 places; the new enterprise incentive scheme, 3,600 places; special intervention, 20,500 places; accredited training for long term unemployed youth, 19,500 places; prevocational training for full time students, 15,000 places; and job placement and training for homeless youth, 1,000 places. That is 434,000 Australians who will be assisted by the Government through its labour market programs.
I would like honourable members opposite to pay particular attention to that figure because that is 434,000 Australians whose futures they want to smash to pieces. Many of these people live in their electorates. Those opposite should go and look them in the eye and be honest and say that they want to wreck their chances of a decent future and a decent job. Those opposite should tell them that they do not need to be trained; tell them that they need only 'dead-end jobs'. Those opposite should tell them that their kids also have no future because the Opposition wants to pay them $3 an hour. They should tell them all of this because that is the Opposition's grand plan for them—and they will tell those opposite where to go.

Today the Opposition Leader said, 'In my day there were numerous opportunities'. In my day—I take it that he is about my age—there were opportunities, but one had to pay for them. One had to pay to go to university. Unless one had the money one could not get to university. The only reason there was a lot of employment in those days was that so many unskilled jobs were available. A 15-year-old had no trouble getting a job as a telegram boy with the PMG. One could go and become a clerk or a bookkeeper in someone's office. Has the Leader of the Opposition not heard of technology? Has he not heard of technological change? Does he not know that these jobs are not there, that they have disappeared?

No goods and services tax will miraculously create a million jobs all of a sudden. Do those guys opposite think that by taxing people an extra 15 per cent on goods and services—they would be taxed every time they got a plumber or a carpenter in and every time they went out and bought a loaf of bread, meat, milk or eggs—more jobs will be created? Even they could not be so stupid as to believe that. I have more respect for the honourable member for Corangamite (Mr McArthur), who is at the table, and the honourable member for La Trobe (Mr Charles), who is sitting at the back, than to think they sincerely believe that by taxing people more they will create a million jobs. That is fairyland and they know it.

The Government's labour market program is a structured, considered and cohesive plan that does not just seek to alleviate the pain associated with unemployment. It is also a plan to train our work force so it can create the challenges that will confront Australia as our economy returns to the high levels of growth that only Labor governments can achieve. These Australians can be trained and be ready to move into rewarding jobs in industries that will make Australia stronger, wealthier and more competitive. We will not abandon these people. We will help them to make a contribution to Australian society now through innovative programs that combine work and training. They will then go on and inject further life and vitality into the Australian economy, armed with skills and experience that they were able to develop because the Australian Government had the will to help them—not throw them off the unemployment benefit after nine months and make them go, cap in hand, and ask for special benefit.

We on this side of the House are fiercely proud of the Labor Government's achievements and commitment to training and education. We see it as the great leveller in Australian society. We have made it possible for Australians of all walks of life to access knowledge and training. We have done this because it is in Australia's broader interests in the future to do so. The more highly educated and expertly trained our society is, the more competitive we become internationally.

Labor has more than doubled education spending since being in office—from $3,702m in 1982-83 to an estimated $9,011m in 1992-93. This is a clear and unambiguous indication of our commitment in this area. In the 1992 Budget alone the Government has provided an extra $165m for government and non-government schools and has also provided other moneys for TAFE and so on. So much money is being provided to make sure that we educate our people that it would probably take me hours to go through it.

In conclusion, I return to the 434,000 Australians that this Government is committed to assisting, in their time of need, through
labour market programs. As a nation it is our responsibility to chip in and give them a hand. They will no doubt pay back that assistance many times over when they move into jobs that will help generate wealth for Australia for decades to come. These jobs will become available. We are making an investment in their future and the future of this country. It is morally, and in the long term economically, the right thing to do.

The Opposition has no place for these people in its Aldous Huxley-styled Brave New World. They would simply become the lost generation of people whose only form of upward social mobility would be through getting a lowly paid, unskilled, dead-end job—that is, if they could get a job at all. We will go out to the community and tell people in no uncertain terms what the Fightback proposals, the scorched earth policy, of the Opposition mean for them. We will tell them that what the Opposition is trying to do is completely shift the whole burden of taxation from the people that cannot pay over to business. How it intends to create jobs like that I will never know. The way to create jobs is to make people sufficiently affluent so they can go out and consume and spend money. That is the way we are doing it. That is the way jobs will be created. In the meantime we are making sure that people are trained to get those jobs. I commend the Budget.

Mr CHARLES (La Trobe) (9.34 p.m.)—The 1992-93 Federal Budget brought down by the Treasurer (Mr Dawkins) is a farcical attempt by a discredited Labor government for the hearts and minds of a desperate and disillusioned Australian public in a blatant attempt to buy votes at the next Federal election. Treasurer Dawkins delivered the Budget but one can read Paul Keating's handwriting promising not only the bacon but also the whole hog. This is a Budget with a handout for just about every vested interest group, funded not by expenditure restraint, improved productivity and increased taxes but by borrowing against future workers' taxes on future workers' incomes. It is, as the Leader of the Opposition (Dr Hewson) has said, a Bankcard Budget. It will only continue to add to our massive debt to the rest of the world built up over 10 years of Labor economic mismanagement.

Budget emphasis on so-called job creation for our youth and for the long term unemployed is destined to increase our skills base, which would be highly desirable for a dynamic and growing economy, but it does nothing to encourage real jobs in real wealth-producing enterprises to use the new skills. There is no emphasis in this Budget on either taxation or labour market reforms designed to give confidence to the private sector to invest in new plant and equipment for new, real jobs.

Treasurer Dawkins in his Budget Speech talked about a flexible wages policy with reference to so-called workplace bargaining. The Labor Party concept of workplace bargaining means only powerful unions negotiating with weakened employers for more overaward wage increases and improved working conditions for those already in jobs and offering little flexibility that is so desperately needed by industry to produce improved productivity. New jobs come with new investment, increased competitiveness and expanding markets. This Budget addresses none of those priorities.

It is appropriate tonight that we look at some of the major constraints to a vibrant economy in our now destitute nation. The first of those constraints, I would maintain, is competitiveness. The World Economic Forum, in a recent report, placed Australia next to the bottom of OECD nations in terms of competitiveness and outward-lookingness. We were just marginally better than Greece. There are two little islands to the east of here—to the right if one stands looking north—that the Prime Minister (Mr Keating) and Senator Cook keep referring to repeatedly, as does our failed Premier in Victoria, Premier Kirner. They keep referring to that little nation in a very negative context. I have to tell them that when it comes to competitiveness it now rates at the top of the tree.

The Prime Minister, Senator Cook and Premier Kirner continue to point to the so-called disaster of New Zealand's industrial relations reform and its employment contracts legislation. While I would not want in any
way to wish upon Australia New Zealand’s conditions, laws or solutions to its problems, I must bring to the attention of the House the fact that it has reversed its position so severely in the last few years over a whole range of major reforms that it has taken to increase its competitiveness that the nation is now outward-looking. It no longer spends its time, as Australia does, navel gazing and looking inward at increasingly massive Budget deficits to fund spending for jobs that just are not there. We do not have an economy which is spending, growing, outward-looking or competitive.

Perhaps we should talk about the Reserve Bank, as we do from time to time. Through an accident of a depression in this country brought on by the then Treasurer and now Prime Minister when he increased interest rates beyond anyone’s capacity to sustain either in business or personally, the Reserve Bank—as tied as it is to government policy—acquiesced in his actions, inappropriate though they were.

I would maintain—and our side of politics would maintain—that the Reserve Bank needs to be freed up of constraints so that it has a charter to follow to maintain the now very low growth in the CPI which we have obtained in the last year. It is good that inflation has stopped growing; that is very positive. But I am not confident that this Budget and its effects in the ongoing increased deficit spending by the Government and by our country as we add to our already massive $145 billion net debt is sustainable. Reserve Bank reform is high on my list of priorities. The Reserve Bank should be able to take action independent of a Government which seems to have policy directions like the infamous scattergun.

I will talk a bit about public sector reform. The other side of the House continues to criticise us for having the audacity to propose some $4 billion worth of net savings in public sector outlays over the life of the first Hewson Government. Those savings will come from a number of initiatives, such as increased efficiency by opening up the public sector and making it more accountable to government and the people to whom it sup-

plies the services. There are some savings in outlays from removing some programs from government spending which are inappropriate, blatant vote buying or for the benefit of vested interests, such as the Government’s partners, the ACTU.

The Labor Party talks frequently about the major changes that it has made to the waterfront in Australia, but that reform is only a drop in the bucket of what is needed if we are going to contain and reduce costs at the waterfront and in local transport. There are still hundreds of non-needed wharfies in the system who have been paid their $100,000-plus as so-called redundancy pay. This money came from government sources; that is, taxes on workers’ incomes. It came also from the industry itself, which is now unable to achieve any cost savings through efficiencies gained by reduced labour content on the wharves. We still need massive reform of our wharves if we are going to become competitive.

We need reform of coastal shipping too. Australian Newsprint Mills in Hobart is unable to ship newsprint to Adelaide competitively against the Canadians, despite the fact that it is able to manufacture the product at the same cost as its competitors in Canadian mills. The total reason is the cost of shipping; it costs so much more to ship a roll of newsprint from Hobart to Adelaide than it does from Vancouver to Adelaide. I am told that if a person wants to ship a motor car from Melbourne to New Zealand, he ships it via Hong Kong or Tokyo in order for it to arrive in Auckland, because he cannot afford to ship it from Melbourne direct.

Auckland made a few changes to its waterfront. It used to have 1,500 employees; it now has 500. It used to take 2½ days to turn around a ship with the 1,500 employees; it now takes eight hours. It used to take eight hours to turn around a truck; it now takes an hour with one-third fewer employees. Instead of working from 9 to 3, they work any hours in the 24 hours that it is necessary in order to unload and load ships. That is why they are at the top of the list for competitiveness.

With regard to telecommunications, this Government has created a duopoly which has
yet to operate and show us any benefits. I can
tell honourable members that we still have
one of the least efficient telecommunications
systems in the world. Before I first came to
this country over 23 years ago, I recall that
for quite a number of years every month my
telephone account arrived with a data sheet
which listed every telephone call I had made,
the number I had dialled, the time that the
call took, the day, the hour of the day, so that
I could decide whether I had made the call
and whether the charge was legitimate. We
still wait for such a facility in Australia, and
we will be waiting quite some time because
we still have such a massive backlog needed
to convert existing analogue centres to new
digital centres. Telecommunications requires
massive reform. Some of my constituents in
business still wait up to six weeks to have a
new telephone connected, and this is in a time
of recession when there are not many new
businesses being established.

Our Labor Government has talked about a
new grid for the power industry, but it cer-
tainly has not talked very much about needed
industrial relations reform within our power
generating system. The degree of overman-
nning, the degree of demarcations and the
degree of industrial disruption in our power
industry is literally staggering.

With regard to rail, honest to goodness, if
we talk about my home State of Victoria it is
no wonder that we are inefficient as a nation
and that we have difficulty competing with
other countries which make the same products
that we make. Our rail systems, both commer-
cial rail which ships our products and our
transport rail within and around our
metropolitan centres, are so highly inefficient
because of severe overmanning and archaic
work practices, particularly in Victoria, that
are almost beyond imagination. Reform is one
thing this Budget did not talk about, but I
maintain that some of those items of reform
are critical to our future prosperity.

The Budget does talk a bit about taxation.
We can imply from some of what Treasurer
Dawkins said that there will be further chan-
ges to Australia's very ramshackle taxation
system. As to fringe benefits tax, now we are
going to tax car park spaces. Honest to

encourage individuals to contribute to their retirement. The Government tells companies that they have to contribute to superannuation, just like it tells them they have to train through the training guarantee levy.

The Medicare levy is going up. That was odds on. But it is not going up enough. Some of the changes to the Medicare system really frighten me. The prospect of the public purse paying for public patients to go to private hospitals is the beginning of the end of the private insurance system in Australia.

Now we are going to tax in-ground swimming pools. Evidently, the Taxation Office has some difficulty in discerning the difference between an above-ground pool and an in-ground pool. We are going to increase the base of the prescribed payments tax. I have no real difficulty with that, except that the paperwork that business and industry go through to comply with the requirements of the PPT are onerous. Let us make no mistake: the cost to business of all the various bits and pieces put on it by this Government, by State government, by regulation and by the unions through the Australian Industrial Relations Commission are absolutely horrendous. Small business spends one heck of a lot of money being a major tax collector.

What is the alternative to the Government’s tax proposals? What would we do? Pretty simply, we would reduce income tax. Let us get it down to the point where average workers on average incomes pay only minimal tax. If they want to double their income, if they want to work overtime, and even if they are in the award system and get triple time for Sunday, their rate of tax will stay the same. How are we going to do that? We will do that by introducing a broad-based goods and services tax which is fair to everyone, which is easy to implement and which is easy to administer.

Along the way, in the process, we will eliminate seven other taxes. We will eliminate the ramshackle wholesale sales tax which the Government will broaden anyway, given half a chance. We will eliminate the payroll tax. That is an iniquitous tax if ever there was one. Here we are in the worst recession for 60 years and we still persist with this iniquitous tax on jobs. We will get rid of it. We will get rid of the fuel excise tax. In a huge country with a small population such as Australia it is critical that our transport be efficient and inexpensive. Our excises taxes on road transport are an horrendous charge which we cannot any longer afford. We will get rid of them. We will get rid of the superannuation lump sum levy, the training guarantee levy, the coal levy and tariffs by the year 2000. We will eliminate seven taxes. Along the way we will increase the viability and the efficiency of the Australian Public Service and make major savings as a consequence.

I refer now to industrial relations—the last but perhaps one of the most important reforms that should have been undertaken in the Budget. There should have been reform of our archaic, centralised, bureaucratic industrial relations system. The Government keeps talking about enterprise bargaining, but it has absolutely no idea what it is about. The Government’s concept is that bargaining means, ‘Let’s bargain between unions and major employer bodies—between the ACTU and Senator Cook; let’s bargain about how much in above-award payments we can achieve out of industry, without absolutely destroying industry’. The Government calls that enterprise bargaining.

Our concept of enterprise bargaining is to get rid of the bureaucratic system and let employees and employers, for the first time in this nation, try to achieve something together to improve productivity so that workers can own their jobs and help own part of their place in their companies, so that management and the work force can work together to improve outputs; to make us efficient and competitive; to provide new jobs for new entrants and to relieve the massive unemployment deficit that we have in this country today.

I am not happy with the Budget, and I have not spoken to the Budget. I have spoken about solutions for Australia to get us out of our crisis—a crisis of confidence, of lack of opportunity; a crisis of business, commerce and industry; and a crisis of real jobs without any real hope for a real future.
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**Dr THEOPHANOUS** (Calwell) (9.54)—We have just heard a rambling speech from the honourable member for La Trobe (Mr Charles) that was distinguished by one factor: it was the same sort of nonsense we have heard from the Leader of the Opposition (Dr Hewson). What is sad about the honourable member's speech is that he said he talked about positive things at the end. In fact, he spent 17 minutes of his 20 minutes in negative carping about this country, its economy and its social circumstances. That is basically the same approach we had earlier this evening from the Leader of the Opposition who, quite frankly, ought to be ashamed of himself for the way he keeps negating and criticising this nation, its economy and its general approach.

Oppositions certainly have a part in a democracy. Every Opposition certainly has the right to try to come into government and to gain power, but within the context of responsible behaviour, not in the context of utterances—especially those of the leaders in the Opposition—which are actually having a negative impact on this country. Indeed, they are creating a negative impact for Australia internationally. It is due to a lot of their comments in the last six to nine months that the economic recovery which should have occurred in this country has not got going.

**Mr McArthur**—You are blaming us for the problem.

**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—I listened to the nonsense of the last Opposition speaker in silence, so honourable members opposite will listen to me in silence. I had to put up with the absolute rubbish spoken by the Leader of the Opposition in silence. The comments of the Leader of the Opposition in the last six to nine months about the Australian economy have had a negative impact. They have been anti-Australian comments. The honourable member for Corangamite (Mr McArthur) knows something about economics. We heard the previous speaker, the honourable member for La Trobe, talking about the cost structure of Australia. Has he travelled overseas? Does he have any idea about the cost structures of other countries? I have just finished a trip through Europe during which I had a very good look at the cost structure, the industrial relations and the economic circumstances of those countries. It is an absolute nonsense to argue that Australia's cost structure is uncompetitive within the OECD. I repeat, within the OECD, within the Western context.

Some members of the Opposition think we are uncompetitive unless we are reduced to earning wages of less than a dollar a day. If that is the meaning of competitiveness then it will never be the case that the Australian people will accept it. But, if we are talking about being competitive within the Western context and what this Government has done to put into place policies that have made Australia more competitive, this Government needs to be congratulated for those policies. Those policies would have worked and would already have got us out of the recession if it had not been for the continuous negative carping of the Opposition in this place and that of the media.

Doom and gloom are created by the constant harping such as we just heard from the honourable member for La Trobe, in which honourable members opposite say nothing positive about Australia, in which they never accept any change that has been made for the positive and in which no positive change is ever good enough for them. That is the approach that we have had. That is not being a reasonable Opposition; that is being an unreasonable and destructive Opposition.

Let me tell honourable members opposite that the Australian people are aware of these destructive practices and will not reward them by electing the Opposition to government. On the contrary, the economy has the basic elements for growth. Interest rates are very low compared with those in most Western countries. Inflation is one of the lowest within the Western context. The cost of living is one of the best in the Western world. Relative to wages, the cost of food, the cost of necessities of life and the cost of services in Australia are among the best. That is something which people tend to forget.
from the fact that there are very positive features of the economy that should by now have given further growth, if it had not been for the doom and gloom psychology created by a negative and carping Opposition in the last six to nine months, in conjunction with sections of the media which seem to think their main role in life is to denigrate this country.

The situation is this: we have a serious problem with unemployment. The Government has been talking about and has admitted this problem, especially in the One Nation statement, in the youth statement, and in this Budget. In three major statements, the Government has not only admitted this problem but has also directly addressed it. In fact, if it had not been for the doom and gloom phenomenon that I have mentioned before, and if the measures which have been put in place had been fully implemented and activated, we would already be seeing even stronger growth than we are seeing at the present time.

Along comes this Budget which is a responsible, stimulatory Budget, totally appropriate in the circumstances. It is not an irresponsible Budget, as the Leader of the Opposition has called it. On the one hand he appeals to everyone saying, 'Something has got to be done about unemployment'. Of course, something has got to be done about unemployment. No economist on this earth is going to tell us that by not having any stimulation in the economy we are going to get rid of the unemployment crisis. Not even a fanatical conservative is going to say that, in the circumstances of the economic cycle which we are in at the moment, we can actually resolve the unemployment crisis by cutting expenditures and not having any stimulation. Yet the Leader of the Opposition in Australia says the Budget deficit is too high, that we should not have this modest stimulation. It is a modest stimulation; it is not a giant stimulation. It is a modest and responsible stimulation; it is not irresponsible, and it is certainly not creating the kind of crisis in the balance of payments which the Leader of the Opposition tried to claim in his reply today.

If he is genuine about resolving the unemployment crisis, the kinds of measures that need to be put into place, at the very least, require a modest stimulation. If he had got up and said, 'Look, the stimulation in this Budget is too low; there is not enough of it', there might have been some economist who would agree with him. Instead, what did he do? He got up and said, 'We don’t need this stimulation. We don’t need a deficit of this kind. We can do without this deficit'. What an absurdity in the current circumstances for anyone to maintain that line. In any other country in the OECD, anyone maintaining that kind of point of view as a solution to the unemployment crisis would be laughed out of court.

Instead, we have a situation in which the media of this country give respectability to that kind of approach. They actually suggest that one could resolve the unemployment crisis without stimulation. I ask those economic commentators who have seen fit to criticise the Budget in terms of its stimulatory impact what the solution is. We know what the proposed solution of the Leader of the Opposition is. If one wants to go for the extreme Right Thatcherite solutions that have been totally discredited in the United States and Britain, fine. What are these economic commentators suggesting is the solution to the problem? It is very simple for them to get up and to say, 'Well, this Budget is too stimulatory'. What then is their solution? What is their alternative? Of course, they never offer an alternative.

Mr Nehl—Seven hundred pages of it.

Dr THEOPHANOUS—The honourable member is talking here about the famous Fightback package! I thank him very much for interjecting; I was just about to get to that package. Let me tell honourable members something about this Fightback package. It is an amazing thing. The previous speaker, the honourable member for La Trobe, said, ‘We are going to offer people income tax cuts and we are going to fund them from the introduction of the goods and services tax’. Of course, that is a dishonest statement. The fact of the matter is, as is well known now by everyone who has followed the debate, that the income
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tax cuts proposed by the Opposition are not going to be funded from the goods and services tax. That goods and services tax is supposed to withdraw a number of other taxes. There will not be a single penny of income tax cuts from the goods and services tax.

It is very interesting, is it not, that what we have here is the most extraordinary proposal in the whole Western world for the introduction of a goods and services tax. Those opposite are going to impose a tax that is going to hit the lowest income people the hardest. They will be hard hit with a 15 per cent tax on groceries and the necessities of life. Then what are those opposite going to do? They are not even going to offer any kind of compensation for those people. What is the Opposition's compensation? It has no compensation for those people. The rich are going to do all right; they will get a few benefits. But what are the poor going to suffer? The poor and the ordinary people of Australia are going to have a redistribution of their income. They are going to pay this huge 15 per cent tax, and they will have no reduction in their income taxes. Whatever small benefits are going to come to them are going to be outweighed by the huge increase of the 15 per cent slug on food items, clothes, services, restaurants—every aspect, every walk of life in Australia will be taxed at a rate of 15 per cent. Can you believe that?

Then we are told that somehow, magically, the imposition of this tax is supposed to resolve whatever crisis exists in the Australian economy. What nonsense! How will such a tax restructure industry? How will such a tax achieve the so-called increased competitiveness? In fact, it will not increase competitiveness; it is going to make it even harder for business. That is why a significant proportion of business interests are opposed to the goods and services tax and are opposed to the Opposition's strategy. That is the truth of the matter, because they know not only that there is going to be a huge confrontation in industrial relations but also that the imposition of the goods and services tax is going to be a huge burden on the Australian people. In fact, the Opposition has no solutions to the central issues in employment, growth, and industry development.

Australia, as I said, is at a crossroads. We have the circumstances in which we should right now be having significant economic growth. There is no doubt about it. Now is the time when businesses should be investing because of the reduced interest rates, because of the low inflation, and because of the better industrial relations climate.

Mr Martin—And the incentives in the One Nation package.

Dr THEOPHANOUS—And the various incentives for research and development, the various incentives for export, and a whole range of other measures that have been put in place—the training of the work force primarily at the expense of the Government—

Mr Nehl—The best trained dole queues in the world.

Dr THEOPHANOUS—The honourable member does not like training. The contradictions in the Opposition's position are mind-boggling. Those opposite think they are going to get a modern economy, a work force that is going to compete with the other countries of the OECD, but they are not going to train the work force; they are not going to put any money into training of the work force. As was mentioned today, they are going to reduce the money that we are proposing to spend in the teaching of English to those people who need English to participate fully in the work force. Things of that kind are not going to come from the Opposition, and yet, magically, what is going to come is a super competitive economy. What rubbish! Let me tell those opposite that the United Kingdom at the moment, which had those policies that the Opposition is prescribing, is now going for a massive dive. Unemployment is high; inflation is high; the position of the Government in terms of the public sector debt is high, and this is after it put into place policies which were supposed to overcome all of those problems.

There is no doubt that we have problems. But it is not a solution simply to attack the Government and to attack the fabric of society in the way the Opposition, particularly the
Leader of the Opposition, has been doing, thereby creating circumstances which are divisive and which do not allow for sufficient growth in this economy.

Let me say to members of Australian society that the real circumstances of the Australian economy are better than has been represented by the Opposition. We all need to get out of this negative mood. We need to give it a go so we can pull out of the recession through investment, through sensible spending, through participation in training programs and the new education programs, and through participation in every field of endeavour. We as a nation can pull out of this crisis. That is what the Leader of the Opposition should be saying to the people; not giving the negative, excessively harping message he has brought forward. If he were to say that, the Australian people could consider him as an alternative leader at the election, but at this stage, by the way he puts these things forward, he does not deserve the mantle of leader of this country.

This is further illustrated by the recent comments of the Leader of the Opposition in relation to another issue which is directly relevant to the Budget expenditures. Yesterday we had a statement from the shadow Minister for immigration, the honourable member for Dundas (Mr Ruddock), in which he attacked the Government, claiming that it was reducing the amount of money being spent on the AMEP—the adult migration education program. He issued a statement saying that the Government had attacked migrant communities. Nothing could be further from the truth.

The fact of the matter is, as has been stated tonight in a joint statement on adult English as a second language programs by the Minister for Employment, Education and Training (Mr Beazley) and the Minister for Immigration, Local Government and Ethnic Affairs (Mr Hand), the new measures in the 1992-93 Budget boost English language training for any adult ESL Australians and they recognise that competence in the English language is central to the education, training and skill formation necessary to produce a more dynamic and competitive Australian economy.

Last year the Commonwealth spent $114.5m on adult English as a second language training. In 1992-93 the Commonwealth will spend almost $142m, comprising $138.2m from the Budget and $3.6m from user charging. Of this amount, DILGEA will spend $99.65m and DEET will spend $42.2m. Now this is important. First of all, the honourable member earlier mentioned that there is no need for training.

Mr Nehl—I didn't say that at all.

Dr THEOPHANOUS—Yes, you did.

Mr Nehl—I said, 'The best trained dole queues in the world'.

Dr THEOPHANOUS—the honourable member keeps interjecting, but everyone heard what he said. The fact of the matter is that training is an essential element, and an essential element of training is the adult migrant language programs to teach people English.

It is important to note here that the Opposition has misrepresented the position in one of its statements. This is part of a series of misrepresentations that we have had, one after the other, in relation to Government programs. What is absolutely absurd about this, though, is that it comes at a time when the Leader of the Opposition, this last week, has launched a disgraceful attack on multiculturalism, the fundamental social policy that has brought this nation together over the last 20 years. It has been supported by the two major parties. We had this disgraceful attack on multiculturalism in which he claimed that it is not a good philosophy. This is the philosophy which was supported by both major parties for the last 20 years.

This shows the sort of negativism, the sort of divisiveness which we get from this Leader of the Opposition. It seems to me that we need to focus on the positives of the Budget to achieve a positive approach so that we can get this nation out of crisis and bring the nation together under the economic and social policies that are needed, including policies such as multiculturalism.
Mr NEHL (Cowper) (10.15 p.m.)—In speaking to Appropriation Bill (No. 1), I must say it is always fascinating to hear my colleague the honourable member for Calwell (Dr Theophanous). He was talking about what he believed to be the deficit we had to have. He made the point that all would be okay with Australia, and all would be okay with the Government's policies—they would work but for the fact that the Opposition is talking doom and gloom. He said they are not working because of our misrepresentation.

I want to say to the honourable member for Calwell, and to all honourable members on his side of the House, that they have been in government for 10 years. It is their policies that are not working, and this is their result. The reality is that the Australia we have today is the product of Labor's ideological chastity belt: no new ideas can get in and nothing productive can get out.

Worse, only today we heard that senior ALP figures want to go back to the political dark ages of socialism. Launching today a Labor book called *Reinventing Socialism*, the ALP National President, the honourable member for Lalor (Mr Barry Jones), said: The Hawke-Keating governments had been like ambulance drivers travelling through a fog.

How very true: they have been creating the accidents, not looking after them. The editor of *Reinventing Socialism* is the honourable member for Denison (Mr Kerr), a Labor member from Hobart. He said that the ideas of low taxes, small government, privatisation and deregulation were now being cast aside. These are the very policies which will provide economic salvation for Australia. Labor is going back to the dark ages of socialism by casting them aside. Would honourable members believe that he also argued for the reintroduction of death duties? This is unbelievable!

I just want to say, too, that being a member of parliament, being a politician, gives one a great deal of responsibility. We all probably talk far too much. I believe that it is far more important to listen than to talk. When one listens and talks to the people—and I see people every week, if not every day—it is absolutely heartbreaking. I am thinking of what the honourable member for Calwell said—that we have to get out of this negative attitude. What can I say to a small, very successful manufacturer—until the recession—in my electorate who is on the verge of having to sack 25 people because he cannot get any orders, because this country is in recession?

I am reminded that a few weeks ago I was speaking at great length with a qualified tradesman aged 39 years with a wife and three children who had not worked since Christmas last year. This man is in absolute despair. In the course of our conversation he was in and out of tears. He is ashamed, not because he has lost his-self respect and cannot get work or because his kids are ashamed of him too, but because of the impact it has had—and I certainly do not condone it. He confessed he had actually been violent towards his wife. This is the sort of family stress and family strain that is being imposed upon people right around Australia.

As part of my objective of listening to people, I sent some 40,000 letters to households in my electorate asking people to tell me what they thought. I believe communication has to be a two-way street. I must say that I am very pleased; so far I have had more than 1,000 replies. As well as the little questionnaire which people could tick, hundreds of people went to the trouble of actually writing letters giving me the detail of their thoughts. I am pleased, too, that a great many people thanked me for asking them. As members of this Parliament that is what we all have to do: we have to ask people what they think, and we have to listen to what they think.

What has come back in the thousand replies that I have had is a revelation of the extent of the cynicism and frustration among our fellow Australians. There is an overwhelming feeling of powerlessness and alienation. Many Australians have just given up; they have walked away from the concept of government and political parties, whether State or Federal. They have just walked away from it. They see the current Government as an obstacle to progress, not as a facilitator. They see it as an obstacle to progress which gets in the way,
which interferes in their day to day lives and frustrates their aspirations.

There is too much regulation, too much bureaucracy and too much taxation and, frankly, Australians are sick to death of it. The Government is not seen to be doing anything good for Australia and the people are crying out for action. I have a letter from one constituent which reflects that exactly. He said:

I love my country and have seen several others in Asia, Europe and the U.S.A.

This person is from Coffs Harbour. He continued:

Coffs Harbour is a great place to live, however the way this country is being stuffed up, the virtues of selling up, investing offshore, living on the dole, putting my wife and son in a modest house down the road so she can get some of my tax bucks back again, has indeed some financial merit worthy of thought.

This is the sort of thinking that is being engendered because of this dreadful social situation that we have. It is not just an economic situation; it is a vitally important social situation. I think it is very bad and I am sure all of my colleagues on both sides of the House will have seen this.

Australians are starting to turn on each other. We are really becoming, not a politically divided society, but a divided society in a great many other ways. I have some constituents who complain about dole bludgers. Let us face it, there are some people who would not work in an iron lung, but the vast majority of unemployed people in this country are desperate for a job; they want to work; they want the self-respect of earning an income and of contributing to our society.

Other people complain about the Department of Social Security doing the wrong thing by them, or people doing the wrong thing by the Department. The hard times being suffered by this country have wreaked anger, spite and hatred within our society from one section to another. Quite frankly, as far as I am concerned this is un-Australian.

What happened to the theory of us all working together? Why has this happened? What has happened to Australia—a great country; a country we can all be proud of? Where is the spirit of the Anzacs? Where is the mateship that helped create this country?

Another constituent from Nambucca Heads wrote:

We are a broad-shouldered lot, but not that broad, and we are buckling under the load.

Why has this happened? I believe it is a lack of leadership and I believe, quite frankly, that the Government must take the blame. It has presided over the great decline and it will leave the coalition with the ruins of Australia.

We will have to re-build this country from the ruins left to us by 10 years of Labor.

The Budget we have had this week shows a complete lack of leadership. It is a confidence trick; it is a bribe; in fact, it is a disgrace. It is creating temporary jobs on borrowed money. If the Minister for Immigration, Local Government and Ethnic Affairs (Mr Hand) were here, I would not be one to knock back the money that he has somehow mixed up in adding up for local government infrastructure. But the reality is—and every thinking Australian knows it—that all that is doing is creating temporary jobs on borrowed money. There is no action in that Budget on the issues that need to be fixed. It is not going down with Australians, because they want action. Some of those who want action are a 55-year-old man from Maxwell who has been unemployed for three years. I hate to say it to him, but if he has been unemployed for three years and he is now 55 years of age, there is no way he is going to get another job. He said:

With so much unemployment in the area it is very hard to find a job, but the Social Security Department does not see it that way, as they keep saying I don't do enough to get a job. What about all the younger people?

This man is 55 years of age and has been unemployed for three years. I do not think he will get a job. I seriously hope that he does.

A 39-year-old man from Bayldon, a suburb near me, has been unemployed for nine months. He says:

The press are making a lot of noise about the young unemployed, which is good, but you don't hear much about what is being done for us in the older age bracket.

And that is true. A mother of seven told me:
There are thousands of young people in our country who are trained, but are jobless so why does Mr Keating want them to train more. The jobs are not there to get because the back of our country has been broken.

Finally, the mother of a son who has been unemployed for several years—he has a wife and two children—said:

He has been on numerous courses but still is unable to find work.

These courses—re-training are (sic) not much good for anyone unless there is a job to go to at the end.

If the government cut out payroll tax, holiday pay loading, and now superannuation, prospective employers might take on more people.

But this Government cannot deliver. The people I represent—and I suspect they are much the same as the people other members represent as well—want real jobs; they want jobs with a future; they want a career; they want meaningful work. Those who still have a job want to be rid of the fear of losing it. Those who still have a job are scared stiff of losing it. They do not want bandaids. I quote from another letter from a constituent in Nambucca Heads:

The quick fix method seems to be to spend more money on re-educating people for jobs.

What jobs? The real trouble with the economy is jobs are getting fewer.

Do you know why? Because the poor employer is saddled with unreasonable and crippling costs.

What did this Budget do for business? Nothing. We have $345m for local capital works—a pre-Christmas dash for cash which will get people off the unemployment list prior to the election which will be at the end of February, early March, because all the good things come in before then and the extra taxes do not start until 1 April. So you can bet your bottom dollar that the election will be late February, early March.

What happens to those people when the money runs out? They are back on the dole. People can see through the Government plan to try to hide the unemployed before the next election, but the reality is that we cannot solve the problem just by throwing money at it. These problems in our economy will not go away until there is real change. We are not going to get any worthwhile change, any real change, any drastic change, until there is a change of government. That is the change that we have to have.

There is not one mention of small business in the Budget. There are no initiatives for small business, no relief, but that is what people want and what people need. They know the answer. Why does the Government not know the answer? Small businesses have a massive potential to create jobs in this country, at no cost to the Government—if we can just give them a go. Rather than spend big with the public Bankcard, the private sector should be targeted as the source for new jobs.

I will give a comment from a small businessman in Coffs Harbour who runs a laundry, servicing resorts, motels and other businesses:

Our concern is penalty rates and weekend loading. If this was abolished we could, as I know thousands of small businesses like ourselves, could and would employ at least one or two extra people.

The Government is prepared to spend billions on make-work schemes, but unemployment will still be over 10 per cent next year. They are the Government’s figures. I suggest and I urge—and we will in government—that we give small business the lead. We will abolish the taxes and charges which make employment too expensive. The coalition has the plan for this. We know what must be done and, quite obviously, the Government does not.

Then there is a letter from a constituent in Emerald Beach on the need for real jobs and no more bandaids. He says:

John Hewson is definitely right! At $3.50 per hour, jobs would be created now. Not hundreds, but thousands of them with enterprising youth continuing in employment, and becoming assets to many businesses in years to come.

Another constituent, who runs a dental laboratory in Coffs Harbour, tells me that he appears to have survived the recession. He is somewhat surprised about it. He employs two people. He said:

Small business needs some sort of tax relief or incentive to create jobs.

And he is right. But in the midst of this recession the Government introduces the
superannuation guarantee levy. What a farce that is. Most of the money so far is just disappearing in administration. It is not so super for the many Australian workers, as things turn out. The need for action is on jobs, real jobs—not expensive make-work schemes that will not go past the next election—jobs for the young, old and middle aged: all Australians.

My electorate of Cowper includes urban and rural areas. It seems that country people have always borne the brunt of downturns. Our farmers are priced out of the markets because of structural faults in the economy, the high costs of production and getting goods to market. We have concerns over the rise of green extremism. I do not attack environmentalists—I believe I am one myself—but there has to be balance, there has to be a rational approach and there has to be reality. We have to cut out the extremism and work together. Farmers and producers are afraid of losing control of their land and their ability—

Debate interrupted.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Dubois)—Order! It being 10.30 p.m., I propose the question:

That the House do now adjourn.

Mr Martin—I require that the question be put forthwith without debate.

Question resolved in the negative.

APPROPRIATION BILL (No. 1) 1992-93

Second Reading

Debate resumed.

Mr NEHL—Farmers and rural producers are concerned about the control of their land. They want to be able to farm, yet there is an extreme element which does not want farmers to continue to do their work. Last Friday there was a rally at Kempsey, in my electorate, of 400 to 500 farmers. There was great anger over and concern about Government controls and intervention in the way they are trying to run their businesses and to produce for Australia.

Unfortunately, the green radicals have hijacked the agenda. They claim to have all the wisdom on the environment. That is not true. The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, the honourable member for Macarthur (Mr Martin), who is at the table, has wisdom on the environment. I believe everybody in this Parliament has some commonsense approaches to the environment. We need to tackle it together. The theme I have been pushing in this speech is that we must all be working together. Our farmers and producers also know the land and how to care for it. In that unfortunate publication earlier this year, the Minister for the Arts, Sport, the Environment and Territories (Mrs Kelly) did attempt to show farmers as vandals. But that is not true.

Thanks to the Government, older Australians are also hurting. The questionnaire I sent out—40,000 letters—drew a great many responses from self-funded retirees, all of whom are suffering because of reduced incomes through falls in interest rates. One letter said:

John is almost 70 years old, and I am 68. We saved all our lives for our retirement. We don't collect one cent of pension, and live entirely on our investments which have dropped dramatically this year.

That is typical of self-funded retirees. They are hurting because of lower interest rates. That hurt is across all levels—city and country, young and old. They want answers. The responses I received from that questionnaire ranged from people in their twenties through to people in their eighties. They want to see Australia moving again. They want real jobs and they want progress. They want the Government to act and do something. They want the Government to get its head out of the sand and listen to those at the grassroots. They believe, as I do, that the Government has no vision and no feeling for ordinary Australians. I do not think this present Government has any idea of what is happening or what people want.

People do not want fix-it Budgets. They want a plan for the future, for their kids and for Australia. The coalition has a plan, a blueprint for this country into the next century and beyond—Fightback. I asked the people of Cowper to tell me what they thought, and
they did. They want action. They want the Government to do something. They want jobs, growth and a return to prosperity. They do not want the Government's plans for more spending on schemes that do not work. They do not want more taxes down the track. The Treasurer still will not come clean over that.

Australia had the Great Depression 60 years ago. Now the Prime Minister we had to have has put us in the great decline. We have an urban landscape of empty offices and empty shops littered with failure and sadness and bankruptcies. We have a population of lost homes, lost businesses, lost farms and lost jobs. Very sadly, we have a people increasingly divided.

Mr Hawke, Mr Keating and their gang have wasted our natural birthright and have given us a cargo cult society in which everybody puts out their hand expecting things to fall from heaven. They have elevated mediocrity to an art form. It is time for a change. It is time for less Government control over our lives. It is time to provide incentive and to create real wealth and real jobs. Above all, it is time to reward success and pursue excellence. We in the coalition have a plan, a vision and hope for Australia. Let us be proud of Australia. Let us be proud to be Australians. Let us all work together. Let us fight back.

Debate (on motion by Mrs Crosio) adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion (by Mr Martin) proposed:
That the House do now adjourn.

McEwen Electorate: Essay Writing Competition

Mrs BAILEY (McEwen) (10.35 pm)—It is my privilege tonight to stand here on behalf of a young student in my electorate, Kylie Richards. Kylie is in the Speaker's Gallery this evening. She is a year 11 student from the Mansfield Secondary College. She lives in Bonnie Doon, in my electorate of McEwen. She is the winner of an essay writing competition. The prize was to be up here in Canberra during Budget week.

Mr Martin—What was first prize?
exports competitive at home and overseas, to encourage exports and cut our massive foreign debt. She believes that the growth of tourism and the development of new export markets, particularly in Asia, have made a difference—but more needs to be done.

Australia, she states, needs new ideas, new products and new technologies to bring dramatic changes to our export industry. Kylie said that technology will have an important role to play in the future economic health and development of the nation for two reasons. Firstly, she says, it will help industries producing goods and services to grow in response to domestic demand rather than simply importing these goods and services from overseas. Secondly, she says, the adoption of technology by industry will improve efficiency, productivity and competitiveness, enabling it to compete effectively in international markets.

Kylie says that planned development is very important to Australia, especially with our ever-increasing population. If we are to support that population, we need careful, planned development within business and the rural sector. Australia, she says, has vast areas of land, with varying temperatures, and care should be taken to utilise the skill, talent and natural resources that both our rural and our urban communities possess. In order to do this, careful town planning is essential, as are well-developed communication links.

She believes that Australia needs to develop 'best practice' methods so that we can become experts in our fields of interest and expertise; that we should strive to become a financial, technological and innovative force in the international sphere. In conclusion, Kylie writes that Australia is currently in the middle of a world recession and that, if we are to come out on top, issues such as employment, education and the environment need particular attention. (Time expired)

Local Government Funding

Mrs CROSIO (Prospect) (10.40 p.m.)—I say both to the honourable member for McEwen (Mrs Bailey) and to the honourable member for Cowper (Mr Nehl) that we all have numerous letters that we could bring in. I could bring in letters from my constituents who are frightened of GST and where it is going to go, what it is going to do for them and how their dollars will not be able to stretch enough because of the taxation—it will be done in such a sly way—but I am not going to do that tonight.

In the very short time allotted to me, I would like to bring to the notice of this House my serious objection to some of the scurrilous comments that have been made since our Budget was brought down and particularly those affecting local government. I believe, and I think it has been supported by most local governments throughout Australia, that this is one of the most significant Budgets for local government in over 20 years.

Within my electorate I have one of those councils which were fortunate enough to receive an allocation in the vicinity of $9m. But it is more than just an immediate one-off boost for capital works projects in an area such as mine; it is an area of spending and funding which is going to help—particularly in New South Wales—those councils which have been deprived because of the Government's restructuring of loan borrowing programs and those local governments which have not been able to raise their rates because of rate pegging, which has been a continuous drain on them, but most particularly where acknowledgment has been given to the high unemployment areas.

Those statistics were taken from the Australian Bureau of Statistics but it is also very clearly laid out in the documents supplied with the Budget Papers. I was rather concerned today when in one of the debates in the House honourable members got up and said that they could not understand the papers given out because the Minister for Family Support and Minister for Local Government (Mr Simmons) had allocated the local government areas by Federal electorates. If they had bothered to get the papers and read them more clearly they would have seen that it is very clearly spelt out that 'even though the list of councils in your electorate targeted for assistance and the allocation to each were appropriate, I have included that information
based on the electoral boundaries'. The Minister also noted that the local authority boundaries seldom correspond with the Federal electoral boundaries and that some local authorities will be listed in more than one electorate. Nothing was hidden; nothing was disguised. It was very clearly spelt out, which the people who were critical of this program, which is going to be implemented throughout Australia, would have seen if they had taken the time and the effort to read it.

I say to this Parliament that I have been working very closely with my council since this measure was announced. There is a feeling of joy. There is a feeling of getting on with the job where local government can promote and bring together projects for capital funding that have never been implemented in the past and could not be implemented in the foreseeable future because the financial structure was not there.

But, most importantly, after listening to the honourable member for Cowper talk about people getting a job, I say that they are not short term jobs; they are jobs which create a domino effect. When a person is earning and then spends that dollar he creates an activity which will again have a domino effect in the small business sector.

What we really have to do, and what we have been doing and will achieve with this Budget, is give that boost to the economy, particularly where it is needed. We are providing the expertise with the financial backing to those councils that have the wherewithal and the manpower. What we have achieved with this Budget and what we are going to achieve in the next 12 months in those communities which have been singled out will be very significant.

My electorate in New South Wales is a very large one. It possibly contains the highest numbers of recent multicultural arrivals in Sydney. We do not expect them to be employed immediately but, more importantly, we expect to provide them with an opportunity to get out and have a job, to work and to be part of the contributions to that community at large. With their work they will provide capital works and ongoing structures that will be a permanent memory to what this Government has done in its 1992 Budget.

In future, if we are going to stand around this Parliament criticising documentation, I beg members of the Opposition to read it first. If they read it with a little bit of sense and comprehension, they will understand what this Government has achieved and what this Government intends to achieve in the community at large in Australia. I commend the Minister for Local Government, his staff and the Government for preparing documentation such as this. We will reap the benefits from it. I would like to see more programs like this being put together.

If at times our economy, which is going worldwide now, needs that boost, then it is up to the government of the day to provide one. We can go overseas; we can look at what is happening to the other economies of the world; but, most particularly, let us look to where we can achieve the solutions in our own country. This is one of those solutions that are going to give a long term effect to those communities which have been fortunate enough to achieve the results. (Time expired)

**Local Government Funding**

Mr RONALDSON (Ballarat) (10.45 p.m.)—It is a great privilege for me to get the call tonight, with the large number of colleagues queued up to have their say. I am very pleased to be given the opportunity. I am not surprised that the honourable member for Prospect (Mrs Crosio) is jumping up and down with great glee about $9m. I can assure the House that if my electorate had been given $9m I would also be jumping up and down and waxing lyrical about the Minister for Family Support and Minister for Local Government (Mr Simmons). But we just got about $2 1/2m. When I say 'just $2 1/2m', I use the expression used by the Minister for Local Government.

I will be very surprised if there is anyone else in this chamber tonight who has seen such devastation as has been reaped in the Ballarat district over the last four years. The Department of Immigration, Local Government and Ethnic Affairs itself has admitted that Ballarat is the second most
vulnerable region in Australia. But, guess what? We could not even crack it for category one, which included Bendigo, Geelong, a great bulk of Melbourne and Shepparton.

I am not looking a gift horse in the mouth, and I have said that publicly. I am pleased that at least we got something. But, if one looks at the way the allocation was approached, there is no way known that the Ballarat region should have missed out on category one. I suspect that there are honourable members on the other side of the House who know my region. Some of them have confided in me that they cannot understand how it was not given category one status.

I am not denying the need of Geelong, I am not denying the need of Melbourne and I am not denying the need of Bendigo, because in no small part the destruction wreaked there has been the fault of not only the Kirner and Cain Labor governments but also the Federal Government. I do not deny these regions their funding, but for the life of me I cannot understand how the Ballarat region was not given that category. It seems quite extraordinary.

In the second largest area in my electorate, the Shire of Stawell and the City of Stawell—both very rurally based regional centres—which have felt the quite dramatic impact of this recession and the rural depression, did not get a red cent, not one cracker. They are hopping mad, not because they feel left out but because they feel that their community has effectively been forgotten by this Federal Government, which has washed its hands of the needs of those communities. The Shire of Lexton is another one that is struggling for survival. Of course the honourable member for Prospect says that $9m is fabulous!

On a personal note, I happen to like the Minister for Local Government. He is one of the few Ministers who ring my office when they are coming to my electorate. I have written to him to thank him for doing that. I also have great personal admiration for him. But he has made an atrocious mistake with this funding. I say again that I am not looking a gift horse in the mouth, but if there is ever a need to review funding under this program it is to review the funding for the Ballarat district. There is not one person in Victoria who can tell me that the needs of Bendigo are double or nearly treble the needs of the Ballarat region.

There is just one more matter I want to address tonight. Tonight we have seen a real Prime Minister. We have seen a man who has legitimate claims to the prime ministership. Comparing the performance of the Prime Minister (Mr Keating) over the last two days with the performance of the man who was at the despatch box at 7.30 tonight, it is obvious that no-one else in this country is capable of leading this country out of the unholy mess that 10 years of Labor have left it in.

The performance of the Leader of the Opposition (Dr Hewson) was magnificent. He addressed what the Labor Party has refused to address for the last 10 years: the fact that there must be a realistic appraisal of the country’s problems and a proper solution to them. All of the scaremongering that Government members engage in in relation to the GST is falling on deaf ears because people are sick and tired of that scare campaign. It is not working; give it away and let us start addressing the real problems. (Time expired)

Local Government Funding

Mr LAVARCH (Fisher) (10.50 p.m.)—The contribution by the honourable member for Ballarat (Mr Ronaldson) was an excellent example of a backbencher trying to ingratiate his way onto the front bench.

Mr Martin—I just don’t think it was quite strong enough.

Mr LAVARCH—I do not know. We did not have palms being laid on the ground and I do not know whether there was enough bowing and scraping in that particular contribution, but it went a reasonable way towards that. I will be very disappointed if the honourable member does not become a shadow Parliamentary Secretary, or at least a Deputy Whip, within a very short time. I am sure his passage to the front bench will be swift and will flow as easily as did the rhetoric from the honourable member.
I would like to take issue with something the honourable member said, apart from his description of his Leader. I will concede that the Leader of the Opposition put in a spirited performance tonight—he spoke absolute drivel of course; but that he did it with a certain panache, I will not deny.

The honourable member spent a great deal of time tonight decrying the fact that his electorate did not receive enough money under the local government capital works program. He said that he would not look a gift horse in the mouth and he was gracious enough to say that he was grateful to receive that money. The irony of his statement is that if the honourable member and his great Leader whom he has been lauding ever achieve the Government benches—and I hope that the honourable member is honest enough to admit this—there will be no local government capital grants scheme. In fact, I think it has already been mooted that if it attains government the Liberal Party will actually scrap the scheme which has already been announced.

That is absolutely outrageous. It is fine for the honourable member to come in here and say, 'Look, my council didn't get enough and the people of my area are being denied funds if you compare it with other areas in the State' and play the great statesman and the representative of the local people and be in there fighting for more; but why do we not get the full and honest story? The honourable member should say, 'If you vote for me, people of Ballarat, not only will you not be getting this scheme, because my Party does not believe in it, and the money under this scheme, but also we will go to you and say that we are going to cut about $6 billion or $7 billion out of government expenditure'.

That was the thrust of what the Leader of the Opposition said tonight. He said that things had gone out of control and that we have this expansive government which is stifling the private sector. This right wing rhetoric flowed as easily from the Leader tonight as it did from the honourable member.

Not only would that local government scheme go; the Opposition would also take another $6 billion or $7 billion out of government spending. Where will that impact most? It will impact most in rural Australia—in exactly the sort of seat that the honourable member purports to represent. If he were truly representing the interests of those people he would be a little more sceptical about the claims that his Leader is making. He knows that his councils do good work in their areas and he knows that they will spend the money wisely and put it towards sound social infrastructure work, such as building roads, community centres, swimming pools or whatever is a high priority within their domain.

That is the beauty of the scheme: there are largely no strings attached. It does not say that councils have to spend it in a particular way on a particular project. This Government has confidence in local government. It has confidence in the decisions it will make. It believes local governments know their local communities and they know where they can spend the money most efficiently and where it will have the most effect.

That is the thing that members of the Opposition cannot stand. They were expecting that it would be some sort of 'paint the rocks white' scheme, with all sorts of strings attached to it and some bureaucracy superimposed on it to determine how the money would be spent. That is not how the scheme is working at all. It has confidence in local government and it supports what local government is doing.

Not only does the Opposition say it will take away that scheme; it also stated quite expressly in Fightback that there will be a 5 per cent cut in Commonwealth funding to local government. So the honourable member's local councils would not get the extra $2m, which he said he was grateful to receive, and another 5 per cent would be cut off the top. Then when they provide their commercial services such as water or electricity there will be a 15 per cent GST applied to those services as well. No wonder local government is running away from the Opposition in droves. If the honourable member were a bit more honest he would confront his constituents and tell them the facts. (Time expired)
Local Government Funding

Mr ANDREW (Wakefield) (10.55 p.m.)—In the concluding moments of this week of the Budget session, I would like to make a comment or two about the remarks that have been made in this adjournment debate. The honourable member for Prospect (Mrs Crosio) made a plea to inject an air of honesty and integrity into the debate. In fact, she said she was prompted to get to her feet by the comments which had been made by the honourable member for McEwen (Mrs Bailey). She said that she felt the honourable member for McEwen had all too conveniently misrepresented the facts.

Mrs Crosio—You didn’t listen.

Mr ANDREW—What was then a little inconsistent—

Mrs Crosio—Mr Deputy Speaker, I raise a point of order and I do not normally do that during a five-minute speech. If the honourable member had listened he would know that I said to the honourable member for McEwen that we all had letters we could bring into this House. I never mentioned that the honourable member for McEwen had misrepresented the facts. The honourable member for Wakefield should read the Hansard.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Dubois)—Order! There is no point of order.

Mr ANDREW—Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. If the honourable member for Prospect claimed that she did not in fact represent the honourable member for McEwen, she implied that since we all have letters—

Mrs Crosio—I have never represented the honourable member for McEwen. I do not intend to represent the honourable member for McEwen.

Mr ANDREW—If, in fact, the honourable member for Prospect feels that she did not misrepresent the honourable member for McEwen I am quite happy to accept that and to accept that I may have unwittingly misrepresented what she said. Frankly, I do not think it matters much. The honourable member for Prospect came in here tonight and implied that she had no shortage of correspondence from people in her electorate who are unhappy with the GST.

Mr Lavarch—So do I.

Mr ANDREW—I accept that and I accept that the honourable member for Fisher wants to make precisely the same point by way of interjection. The honourable member for Prospect then went on to be critical of the remarks made by the honourable member for Ballarat (Mr Ronaldson) in claiming that he had misrepresented all or much of what the make-work program was about. I simply make a plea in this adjournment debate for a little less misrepresentation on both sides.

I am as tempted as the honourable member for Prospect to rise to my feet and interject when I hear the nonsense espoused by the Government about precisely what the GST would do. Does the honourable member think that people in my electorate are delighted about the prospect of a change to taxation? Of course they are not. But I do not find that they are actually opposed to it; I find that they are, at worst, apprehensive. As a Federal member—and all other Federal members do the same thing—I have talked to them about what we propose to do and I have presented a graph or two. I invariably find, as the honourable member for Gwydir (Mr Anderson) and the honourable member for Ballarat must find also, that in the face of the facts they are at least reassured.

Day in, day out we have this perpetual cry from the Government that everything will go up 15 per cent. What did we hear from the Prime Minister (Mr Keating) today? He said there would be an extra $30 billion in taxation and in the next sentence he amended that figure to $27 billion. Is it not time that someone in the Government was prepared to recognise that the Opposition proposes to reduce the tax take by $35 billion, as is spelt out in Fightback and as was alluded to by the honourable member for Fisher (Mr Lavarch)? Of course, that will mean that less tax will be collected. But members of the ALP cannot have it both ways; they cannot claim that we will increase taxes for Australia’s taxpaying public and that simultaneously a coalition government will have less money to spend. The reality is that every taxpayer will pay less
tax and, as the honourable member for Fisher has said, as a result there will be less money for us to spend. It is as simple as that.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER—Order! It being 11 p.m., the debate is interrupted. The House stands adjourned until Tuesday, 8 September 1992, at 2 p.m., in accordance with the resolution agreed to this day.

House adjourned at 11 p.m. until Tuesday, 8 September 1992, at 2 p.m., in accordance with the resolution agreed to this day.

PAPERS
The following papers were deemed to have been presented on 20 August 1992:


Christmas Island Act—Ordinance—1992—No. 5.

Civil Aviation Act—

Civil Aviation Regulations—Civil Aviation Orders—Part 95—Amendment, 19 August 1992.


