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Thursday, 30 May 2002

The House met at 9.30 a.m.

ABSENCE OF THE SPEAKER

The Clerk—I inform the House of the absence of the Speaker who will be in attendance later this day. In accordance with standing order 14, the Deputy Speaker, as Acting Speaker, will take the chair.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Causley) then took the chair, and read prayers.

NEW BUSINESS TAX SYSTEM
(IMPUTATION) BILL 2002

First Reading

Bill presented by Mr Slipper, and read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr SLIPPER (Fisher—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Finance and Administration) (9.31 a.m.)—I move:
That this bill be now read a second time.

As part of the Howard government’s reform of business taxation, this bill introduces a new simplified imputation system which will replace the current imputation system. The measure provides further evidence of the government’s commitment towards business tax reform.

After extensive consultation, the Ralph Review of Business Taxation recommended redesigning the company tax and imputation system to achieve:

integrity through the entity chain;
simplification of the franking account;
refunding excess imputation credits; and the reduction of the company tax rate.

This bill introduces the simplification proposals into the tax laws. Measures such as refunding excess imputation credits and the reduction of the company tax rate have already been introduced by the government and been passed by parliament.

The simplified imputation system will apply from 1 July 2002.

Full details of the measures in this bill are contained in the explanatory memorandum.

I commend this bill and present the explanatory memorandum.

Debate (on motion by Mrs Crosio) adjourned.

NEW BUSINESS TAX SYSTEM (OVER-FRANKING TAX) BILL 2002

First Reading

Bill presented by Mr Slipper, and read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr SLIPPER (Fisher—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Finance and Administration) (9.34 a.m.)—I move:
That this bill be now read a second time.

This bill forms part of the package of three bills that will give effect to the Howard government’s reform of business taxation in respect of the imputation system.

The purpose of this bill is to provide for a mechanism that ensures that companies frank distributions that they make in accordance with the benchmark rule.

Full details of the measures in this bill are contained in the explanatory memorandum.

I commend this bill and present the explanatory memorandum.

Debate (on motion by Mrs Crosio) adjourned.

NEW BUSINESS TAX SYSTEM
(FRANKING DEFICIT TAX) BILL 2002

First Reading

Bill presented by Mr Slipper, and read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr SLIPPER (Fisher—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Finance and Administration) (9.35 a.m.)—I move:
That this bill be now read a second time.

This bill forms part of the package of three bills that will give effect to the government’s reform of business taxation in respect of the imputation system.

The purpose of this bill is to ensure that, in essence, a company makes good the over-imputation of franking credits that it makes to its shareholders when making franked distributions to them. This will be the case where the company attaches more franking
credits to shareholder distributions than the tax that it has actually paid. Full details of the measures in this bill are contained in the explanatory memorandum.

I commend this bill and present the explanatory memorandum.

Debate (on motion by Mrs Crosio) adjourned.

**TAXATION LAWS AMENDMENT BILL (No. 4) 2002**

*First Reading*

Bill presented by Mr Slipper, and read a first time.

*Second Reading*

Mr SLIPPER (Fisher—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Finance and Administration) (9.37 a.m.)—I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

This bill amends the Income Tax Assessment Act 1936 and the Income Tax Assessment Act 1997 to give effect to several measures that have been announced by the government.

This bill includes amendments to the thin capitalisation regime to ensure the regime operates as intended. The amendments, while largely technical in nature and apply from 1 July 2001, will improve the integrity of the regime and clarify the operation of the law.

The key features of the amendments are the exclusion of assets that are used principally for private or domestic purposes; ensuring that the Australian assets threshold rule operates as intended. It will provide for consistent treatment of ‘interest free’ loans; and ensuring that a number of technical concepts in the legislation have their intended meanings.

Also contained in this bill is new capital gains tax rollover, which will facilitate a trust converting into a company by disposing of all its assets to the company. The rollover will not apply to discretionary trusts. It is intended to increase the commercial flexibility available in selecting an appropriate business structure for the changing needs of business. This rollover is optional and will be available for disposals of assets by the trust on or after 11 November 1999. It will also be available for the exchange of interests in the trust for shares in the company on or after that date.

Schedule 3 to this bill will introduce changes, which come into effect from 1 July 2002, which are designed to assist Australian businesses seeking to attract key personnel to Australia. This will be achieved by reducing the tax burden on people who are considered to be temporary residents of Australia for taxation purposes.

There is also a provision for an exemption from Australian tax on all foreign source income and capital gains for a maximum period of four years to individuals who are considered to be temporary residents. This exemption applies only where that income or gain is not associated with Australian employment or with services performed while a resident of Australia. The bill will also exempt temporary residents from interest withholding tax obligations associated with overseas liabilities. This assists those Australian businesses seeking to employ key personnel from overseas, as it will reduce the cost of doing business in Australia.

Finally, under the current uniform capital allowances regime, the Commissioner of Taxation is progressively reviewing, and making updated determinations of, the ‘safe harbour’ effective lives. The commissioner cannot take into account economic policy considerations such as the impact on investment decisions in particular industries or the wider economy. Therefore, the government has decided to introduce certain statutory ‘caps’. These caps will be the effective life used to calculate the deduction for those depreciating assets if the taxpayer chooses to use an effective life determined by the Commissioner of Taxation. The cap, if any, that applies to that asset is shorter than the effective life determined by the commissioner. This means the taxpayer will be able to deduct the cost of the asset over a shorter period of time than would otherwise be the case.

I commend the bill to the House and present the explanatory memorandum.

Debate (on motion by Ms Ellis) adjourned.
FAMILY AND COMMUNITY SERVICES LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (AUSTRALIANS WORKING TOGETHER AND OTHER 2001 BUDGET MEASURES) BILL 2002

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 29 May, on motion by Mr Anthony:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Ms HALL (Shortland)  (9.41 a.m.)—The Family and Community Services Legislation Amendment (Australians Working Together and other 2001 Budget Measures) Bill 2002 is legislation designed to give effect to the government’s welfare reform agenda, and we all know what welfare reform is to the Howard government. It is not about implementing a better system that will make it better for those people that need some assistance from government at times, it is not about helping people from welfare to work; rather it is about cost-cutting, it is about blaming the victim, the person that is forced to rely on welfare for one reason or another, and it is about targeting the most vulnerable people in our community.

I believe the government stands condemned for the way it has targeted those people in our community that really look to government for assistance at times when they need it most. It is a mean-spirited government, one that does not have the understanding nor the ability to comprehend the issues that are important to people that find themselves in the position of needing assistance. It shows a lack of comprehension that a person can actually work hard, do the right thing and then find themselves in a situation where they are unemployed or in need of receiving the disability support pension or a supporting parent payment. I know this government’s attitude to supporting parent benefit is a belief that if a woman—they tend to think it is a woman mainly—is left to care for children on her own it is her fault. The government gives assistance but very reluctantly.

With that brief introduction, I will talk a little bit about the legislation. In the main, this bill seeks to give effect to the Australians Working Together measures announced in the 2001-02 budget. This bill also seeks to give effect to the 2002-03 measure to delay the implementation of the working credit which was announced as part of the Australians Working Together measures. I find it very disturbing that the working credit—probably the only positive part of this budget—is to be delayed by six months.

This is an initiative that will really help those unemployed Australians who are seeking to re-enter the work force. It will act as an incentive and will be a move away from this government’s punitive approach to welfare in getting people back into the work force. This government has a very strong record on implementing measures by using the stick approach rather than the carrot approach, which would be an incentive for people to move from being unemployed by giving them the assistance they need to get into the work force. It is all about mutual obligation and getting people to jump through hoops in order to meet the government’s requirements.

Schedule 1 of this legislation sets out proposed new arrangements for people seeking parenting benefit payments. It contains requirements whereby parents—whose youngest child is between the age of 13 and 15—will need to participate in an activity of 150 hours duration over a six-month period. This requirement will not apply to a person who is severely disabled. If a person does not meet that requirement they can be breached and subject to more regular scrutiny to ensure that they meet it. I am always very concerned about the breaching of people that is so common under this government.

In my area there was a change recently to the bus routes. A person who was required to be at the Centrelink office went to the bus stop and, because of this change, the bus did not turn up. The person missed their appointment and they were breached. It took a lot of effort on behalf of my office to turn around this breach. Many breaches of people occur purely on administrative grounds. I do not think that enough thought and consideration on an individual level is given to the breaching process. We can all come up with examples of people who do the wrong thing, and that is what breaching is there for. But
when the number of people who are breached in Australia each day is at the level it is now, when there is insufficient scrutiny of the reason people are being breached—the reason for that person not doing whatever it was that they were asked to do by Centrelink—and when there is a lack of scrutiny involved in the process it is a matter of great concern.

Schedule 2 establishes a tax exempt supplement of $20.80 per fortnight to assist people undertaking approved language, literacy and numeracy training and who receive one of the follow payments: disability support pension, mature age allowance, Newstart payment, parenting payment, partner allowance, widows allowance and youth allowance. That is a good initiative, but I express a real concern—that is, the ability and expertise of those in the Centrelink offices who are responsible for assessing people with numeracy and literacy problems. It worries me that they do not have the necessary skills.

The first recommendation in the Pearce report was that we need to look at the initial Centrelink interview assessments. That is probably the area where the numeracy and literacy ability of the job seeker is assessed. I put it to the government that the officers conducting the interviews do not have the skills to do so. You need to have proper training to be able to assess a person’s numeracy and literacy skills. I am sure we have all come across constituents who, every time they come into our office, forget their glasses and need assistance to complete forms. People with literacy problems have many strategies such as this for covering up their inadequacies in that area. I believe that before they can be properly assessed we need to make sure the Centrelink officers are correctly trained so they can deal with the problem.

The Pearce report contains a wealth of information. It really shows why we have so many problems with breaching in this country. It shows that people are breached far too quickly without the reason for their noncompliance—to use the government’s term—being properly investigated and without due consideration. The review considered that greater care should be taken to ensure that obligations that were applied to people looking for work were appropriate to their particular abilities. This comes back to the jumping through hoops scenario. You can say, ‘Yes, you have to do something,’ but it should be properly developed and it should be achievable. Any goal set has to be realistic. Any goal set has to be achievable and not put in place just so it can support the government’s requirements of making people who are unemployed undertake some activity, whether it be appropriate or inappropriate. There are a number of Job Network providers in my area who have decided they will not re-tender for this round simply because of the inappropriateness of the requirements placed on them—the reporting processes that are involved in the breaching process.

I have great concerns about this legislation because it has been rushed through this House in just the same way as the antiterrorism legislation was rushed through the House. The one thing that is notable about it is the lack of consultation that has taken place. How can an opposition properly examine really important legislation like this—legislation that links into a report by Professor Pearce and his committee about breaches and penalties in the social security system—when there has been a lack of consultation with peak groups and consumer groups and an inability for the process of examining legislation to take place properly? I think it is a further example of the lack of commitment this government has to the democratic processes of this country.

It is all about pushing through legislation, be it desirable or undesirable, at all costs. It is about blaming the victim and the people who need the most assistance from government. It is also about a lack of real commitment to helping people who are unemployed, people who are single parents and people who are in receipt of the supporting parent benefit—helping them move from a situation where they are reliant on welfare to one of preparing themselves for work. It is all about pushing people, without proper consultation, without properly designed programs and without a real desire to improve their quality of life. It is more about cutting costs, with very little consideration of the individual,
their long-term welfare and the benefit they can gain from a properly designed program that will help them into long-term employment and future financial security.

In conclusion, I would have to say that the government is condemned for the approach it has taken with this legislation and for its failure to ensure that the one positive aspect of the legislation—the working credits—was introduced immediately. If there was one thing this government could have done to really help people get into work and improve their situation, it would have been to ensure that the working credits were effective immediately.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Message from the Governor-General recommending appropriation announced.

Third Reading

Mr ANTHONY (Richmond—Minister for Children and Youth Affairs) (9.55 a.m.)—by leave—I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

FAMILY AND COMMUNITY SERVICES LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (DISABILITY REFORM) BILL 2002

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 16 May, on motion by Mr Anthony:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Mr SWAN (Lilley) (9.56 a.m.)—The Family and Community Services Legislation Amendment (Disability Reform) Bill 2002 gives effect to the government’s budget decision to cut the payments of 200,000 people with disabilities by $52 a fortnight. This measure has been variously described by the Howard government as ‘the next stage of welfare reform,’ ‘a necessary evil that will ultimately ensure the sustainability of the social security system,’ ‘a crackdown on rorters with bad backs,’ and now ‘a savings measure’. It is an unprecedented attack on the 3.1 million Australians who have a disability.

The truth is that this measure cannot be justified in terms of welfare reform. It removes the income and material assistance available to people with disabilities and asks them to go out and get a job. The question that no government member, from the Prime Minister down, will answer is why you need to cut someone’s pension to help them get work. The sustainability of the social security system is under threat only because the current government took the view during its first six years in office to consign welfare recipients, from job seekers to parents to people with disabilities, to the scrap heap. The government cannot deny that its emasculation of Working Nation programs from Centrelink and social services in general cut the legs from under a reformed social security system.

The truth is that Labor’s disability reforms of the early nineties, which activated the social security system and put a focus on the assessment of the capacity of people receiving the disability support pension, would have assisted many people to move off the pension and into work, but they have been undone by this government. It is ironic that the government have recently put out a tender for 100,000 quick and dirty disability support pension reassessments of that supposedly determine ability, not disability. This is the same government that abolished Labor’s disability support panels—expert panels equipped to provide a thorough assessment of people’s capacity, not a two-hour knock-off job. The government’s new assessment tool will help them take people off the disability support pension and down to Newstart. It will in no way be a thorough process. It is simply a disgrace and reveals the real intent behind the government’s bill and these measures.

What we are on about is that people with disabilities are going to bear the brunt of cuts because of the government’s spending spree during the election and because of Peter Costello’s dud job application for the prime ministership. Welfare reform is not the motivation—solving the deficit problem is, and the people who are expected to pay for that are people with disabilities. They are being held hostage by this government—hostage to
Peter Costello’s spending spree and John Howard’s attempt to do anything to win an election.

In 1998-99, the last time a count was taken, just 10,855 people left the disability support pension for the work force. Ten thousand people out of 650,000 moving into work is a deplorably low number of transitions that are driven by the absence of assistance to make the transition. Look at the supported wage system: a program which began under Labor but which was neglected by this government. The supported wage system allowed people with disabilities access to the open labour market at a pay level commensurate with their ability and productivity. But in the financial year 2000-01, just 986 placements occurred, which assisted just 0.15 per cent of the disability support pension population. Look at the Commonwealth Rehabilitation Service: an organisation set up to assist people to make the transition back to work. In the 12 months to 30 June last year, the organisation had provided rehabilitation to just 18,112 clients. It achieved durable employment outcomes for just 6,730 people. Clearly, we are offering rehabilitation to just a fraction of those on the disability support pension who could benefit from it and then make the transition from welfare to work. The capacity of our specialist disability employment services—services funded to provide the tailored support that people need to enter open employment—are also severely limited when set against the 650,000 people on the disability pension. As at June 2000, some 46,000 people were on the books of these services, about 30,000 were being supported in work and 14,000 were being assisted to look for work. The scheme is assisting just over seven per cent of the disability support pension population.

The government will point out that the scheme is due to get additional places this year and in 2004, but there will still be an absolutely massive imbalance between the number of people with disabilities and the amount of specialist employment assistance available to go around. What the Howard government also will not point out is that for most of the time they have been in office they have been taking an annual efficiency dividend of one per cent off disability employment services—one per cent off their budgets each year, every year. The central issue facing the growing number of people on the disability support pension is not the rate at which they are paid, the absence of activity testing, or even lax assessment procedures—important as they are—it is the unwillingness of the Howard government to recognise the importance of investing in assistance, training, rehabilitation and support if we are to increase people’s access to work. In their heart of hearts, the government know that their attempt to force people with disabilities off the pension and onto the dole is not supported by the community or indeed by their own market research. The community knows that this is about forcing people with disabilities to pay for John Howard’s and Peter Costello’s spending spree prior to the election.

That is why the Prime Minister was so quick to resort to the rorting allegations last Thursday week. He resorted to the big smear—to smear all those people on disability support pensions as being rorters. One minute they were high-minded. On budget night they said, ‘Aren’t we fantastic? We’re going to go out there and help people with disabilities to participate. There will be lots of money. We must be strong and confront the looming crisis.’ The next day where did they go? They went tabloid—lowbrow—and warned, ‘We must crack down on the back rorters.’ Out came the Centrelink footage of people on pensions laying bricks or riding horses, no matter how old it is. That is one of the biggest fit-ups in political history.

Nearly 32 per cent of all disability support pensioners have musculoskeletal conditions. They account for a broad range of subconditions, only some of which are so-called bad backs. The definition of people with musculoskeletal disabilities is very broad. Many people have more than one disability. That is, a person with a nervous system disorder may also have a musculoskeletal disability or vice versa. Also, 71.1 per cent of pensioners with a musculoskeletal disability are aged over 50 years. In most cases, the recipients are older blue-collar workers—men and women—who have been down a mine, have spent all their
working days working in a hospital ward or whatever. Those people have paid their taxes and have worked hard all their adult lives. They are now displaced by structural changes that have left them with plenty of physical pain and the wrong sets of skills to get work. Those people may not work again unless a special investment is made, but there is no special investment, just a pension cut. It is an investment that this government have not and will not make.

What we have before us in this bill does no more and no less than hold the disabled hostage to pay for the pre-election spending spree of Howard and Costello. It is a plan to save money by shunting one in every four disability pensioners onto Newstart. They will suffer the loss of $52.80 in income each fortnight—a 12 per cent drop in their income. I would like to run through what $52 of food a fortnight means to people. It means this: cheese, fish fingers, frozen peas, spread, skim milk, noodles and pasta. You do not have to go too far down that list before you get to $52 a fortnight. It is not a lot of cheese, bread or milk, but it means a lot. The government are going to take bread, cheese, milk, noodles and pasta off the kitchen tables of people on disability support pensions and they are not going to provide them or guarantee them the assistance, if they can work or get work, to make up the difference. That is what is so obscene about the measures contained in the bill. This cut of $52 a fortnight is six times the value of the money provided to them as GST compensation. It is taking back their GST compensation and a lot more. I reckon that age pensioners will have to keep a lookout for the inevitable Howard government grab on their GST compensation, and so too should those on Newstart.

This cut comes from a simple shifting of the goalposts—the reassessment of what constitutes a disability. Those who are judged to be capable of working 15 hours or more at award wages will lose access to important support and assistance over and above the $52 a fortnight cut to their payments. Yesterday we made public a question and answer document that explains exactly what people will lose. They will lose their pensioner concession cards, their pharmaceutical allowance and telephone allowance, and their pensioner education supplement. These are the sorts of things you would think would help someone find work or train towards that end. The document specifically spelt out what disability employment organisations already knew; it spelt it out in black and white. Those affected, those getting the cut, will not be guaranteed a place in a service or a rehabilitation program. I doubt that even one in three or four people—and possibly even one in five—will get the support they need out of that 200,000 who will be removed from benefits.

To add insult to injury, the government has tied the passage of this bill and the cuts it contains to the maintenance of funding under the Commonwealth-state disability agreement. In a press release on budget night, Minister Vannstone threatened that the maintenance of unmet need funds totalling $100 million a year would be cut unless savings are found. This press release from Senator Vannstone has got to be one of the longest political ransom notes in history, brazen as it is, saying, 'We’re going to cut the pensions of 200,000 people and, if you don’t agree to that cut, we’re going to withdraw $500 million plus from the Commonwealth-state disability agreement.' This is just unconscionable political thuggery and blackmail.

I want to spend a couple of minutes running through the invidious choice that Senator Vannstone has framed, not just for the parliament but for people with disabilities, because it lays bare the political blackmail of Senator Vannstone and the government. If this parliament passes this bill, 31,000 Queenslanders with a disability will have their pensions cut. If parliament rejects the bill, Senator Vannstone is threatening to take $17.5 million of support services from disability services in Queensland which threatens 1,200 families from 1 July—in five weeks time. That is what it means in Queensland.

If we pass this bill, 54,000 disability support pensioners in New South Wales will have their pensions cut. If we reject it, Senator Vanstone is threatening to take $34 million from disability services in New South Wales which will de-fund 200 disabil-
ity services from 1 July. In Victoria, she will cut the pensions of 38,385 disability support pensioners. If we do not pass the bill, she is going to take $25 million from disability services in Victoria, which means 315 fewer home first clients, 1,500 fewer respite episodes and 850 fewer care packages.

In Tasmania, she will cut 7,792 disability pensions or she will cut $2.6 million in packages going to 143 people needing high level personal care in that state. In the ACT, the choice is cutting the pensions of 1,659 disability support pensioners or taking $1.7 million from aged carers of people with a disability. In the Northern Territory, the choice is to cut 1,274 disability support pensions or to cut $1 million in personal support for people with severe lifelong disabilities. In South Australia, either 15,606 people have their pensions cut or 654 people with ageing carers lose access to respite care. In Western Australia, the choice being offered by Senator Vanstone is for either 13,578 people to have their pensions cut or there will be a $8.9 million cut to disability support services.

This is money that the Commonwealth promised would be maintained and they made that promise on 25 July 2000 in a statement at the Australian and New Zealand meeting of disability support pensioners. Minister Anthony said they were committed to the:

Commonwealth, State and Territories to maintain the current base funding levels for disability services under the third CSDA, including that significant increased Commonwealth/State/Territory contributions to address unmet need in the last two years of the current agreement.

That means that the money they put in two years ago to meet unmet need would be there in the new agreement and would stay there. It is not new money, so Senator Vanstone tells lies in press releases like this claiming that there is a massive increase in funding for disability support services when all they have done is maintain the old level of funding into the new agreement. There is no new money for disability support services and she then has the hide to say to this House that, if we do not agree to cut the pensions of 200,000 disability support pensioners, she will take away the old money in the new agreement and close down services right across the country. She is holding those service providers and the people dependent on them political hostage to the fact that Peter Costello and John Howard spent all the money during the election campaign and the people who are expected to pay the price are not only disability support pensioners and their income support but also their families and carers who may well have their services slashed.

This government is engaged in many cuts across the board. What is going to happen in five weeks time if Senator Vanstone makes good on her threat and we on this side of the House do not support the cuts to the pensions and we are backed in the Senate by the minor parties? I can tell you one thing: we will campaign the length and breadth of this country against this vicious, evil measure and every one of the backbenchers across that side of parliament are going to find the political heat of people with disabilities in their electorates because this measure cannot be justified in terms of principle or political practice in this country; it is simply unconscionable.

So what we have here is the government saying: ‘The cupboard is bare. We spent it all in the election. We’ve spent the money for disability services on getting re-elected. So 200,000 people with disabilities are going to have to suffer a 12 per cent pay cut to keep their services’—some choice! We are not going to be part of that blackmail. We have suggested plenty of ways to save the required money—for example, by making the Howard government a smaller advertiser than McDonald’s and Toyota. We will not be supporting the pension cuts. We intend to continue to apply a blowtorch to the government’s belly. This is a promise that was made two years ago; it should be kept. It is there in bricks and mortar and services. It is not new money; it is old money.

What the government are really saying is a bit like their attitude to workers’ entitlements. This money is like workers’ entitlements: money you count on in times of need, money that is rightly yours; this money is
rightly that of people with disabilities. What the Howard government are saying is that they want you to agree to a cut in your wages to pay you your entitlements. We are going to fight for the entitlements of people with disabilities. And, of course, this government does not have a great record of paying workers’ entitlements.

So, while we are battling about the $100 million, we will not let the government also forget that this $100 million only brings the Commonwealth’s share of funding to 1997 levels and that the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare estimated growth of some 10 per cent in demand between 1997 and 2003. And ACOSS estimates that by 2007 Commonwealth funding levels will be around 20 per cent behind need. In other words, the Howard government’s failure to commit growth funding to the CSDA means that by 2007 Commonwealth funding levels will be a decade in arrears. In real terms, there is not one new set of money going into these agreements. This has obvious flow-on effects for services that are already operating in an environment where the GST and insurance costs are taking their toll. It creates problems for services in New South Wales, particularly because the Howard government will not recognise the one-off costs of new social services and community services awards. When it comes to the disadvantaged in this country, the government always promise reform but they deliver punishment. We have hit rock bottom. Even the tired rhetoric from this government cannot disguise their savagery.

There may be one positive element of this reform: it may bring heightened public awareness of the unmet need for disability services in our community. That might be the one positive thing that comes out of this debate. What we do need in this country is genuine political consensus for genuine welfare reforms. We need to break down the barriers between the Commonwealth and state governments that inhibit the efficient and accountable delivery of services, but this cannot be achieved if one of the parties is negotiating while aiming a gun at the heads of people with disabilities and their families. We need to have as our goal helping people with disabilities to participate. That means identifying pathways through rehabilitation, specialist training, skilling and employment assistance. We need to encourage and prepare people with disabilities for participation. We do not need to cut their pensions. There is a cost attached to having a disability, and that cost increases with participation.

Labor will not support pension cuts, nor should the Prime Minister, who promised before the election that they would not occur. We cannot ask someone to participate if we cannot guarantee some level of support for them to get work and to stay in work. We cannot afford to set people with a disability up to fail. There needs to be a one-on-one commitment from government to each person who is making that transition from welfare to work. The government must recognise there are up-front costs attached to real reform of the disability support pension. In fact, there is a large up-front investment needed. But in the long run such an investment for some will save the equivalent of a whole pension—$421 a fortnight—and improve someone’s life, rather than getting just $52 a fortnight plus the human misery that goes with it. That is why we will not support this bill: it matches none of these principles. We are not going to be blackmailed. Labor is not going to negotiate on any aspect of the legislation in this bill—not in this House or in the Senate. We implore the Democrats to back our stance. They too must remain locked solid in the Senate in defence of 200,000 people who are going to pay the price. This is not a time for negotiation.

I would like to spend a few minutes citing one or two cases of people that have written to me, to give the human dimension here. Let us take the case of a 33-year-old single female in the housing rental market. The diagnosis is post-traumatic stress disorder; major depression; dissociative disorder; extensive childhood physical, mental and sexual abuse; suicide attempts; and agoraphobia. She was on sickness benefits for two years before going onto DSP. DSP enabled gradual return to work over a period of four years: initially four hours per fortnight, then five hours per week, currently 20 hours per week but that is very difficult. She is unable to work for more
than 20 hours per week; therefore, DSP is required to supplement income.

It is pointless for this person to go on unemployment benefits, as she is incapable of seeking or accepting additional employment. The stress of fulfilling eligibility requirements for unemployment benefits would have debilitating health consequences, and the strain would ultimately lead to fewer hours being managed in the work force. The point is that this person is on DSP for a reason: she has a disability. DSP allows for health relapses, which is of course the nature of mental illness. If you talk to anyone who is providing services in this area, they can tell you that this will not work for this particular group of people. It is going to cause immense hardship. I go to the case of a 34-year-old woman with severe arthritis, who wrote:

I’ve had both my hips and knees replaced and right wrist fused. I take several different medications a day to keep the condition and pain manageable.

Despite what the current Government portrays, life on the DSP is anything but a picnic.

………

Two years ago I decided to train in web design. It offered me the possibility of self employment ... I went to the Commonwealth Rehabilitation Service to help with taxi fares ...

These are cries from the heart. She goes on to say:

My point is this—if this Government pushes through this onerous legislation, I would not have had the possibility of educating myself to become self sufficient.

Another letter I have received says:

I and my wife are both on disability pensions (my wife due to brain surgery and myself due to 5 complete nervous breakdowns).

The proposed cuts to the disability would be devastating to the likes of us who are now receiving less than $200,000 per week each.

Or this letter from Brighton in Queensland says:

Please reconsider the changes to the Disability Support Pension as this will have a devastating impact on someone close to me.

This person is an incomplete quadriplegic who travels a long distance three times a week for eighteen hours of work.

He does this as much to teach his children a work ethic as for the money he earns.

Having such a disability he can only use the knuckle of one finger to operate the computer. Imagine how difficult this is for him. He is paid a commission on sales and this is as much as his frail body can endure.

This truly draconian budget would appear to award his effort by depriving him of his part pension and far more seriously of his health card.

I am depending on your Christianity to reconsider.

I move:

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

“the House declines to give the Bill a second reading, and

(1) condemns the Howard Government’s attempt to cut the pensions of 200,000 Australians living with a disability;

(2) notes that the Government’s Budget assault on Disability Support Pensions runs contrary to the principles and proposals set down by the McClure Committee, which received the endorsement of the Australian Labor Party;

(3) endorses the view of the ALP supporting the need for welfare reforms that offer the opportunity for people with disabilities to participate fully in the community, including to work, in preference to the Government’s proposals which cut the level of their income support, while forcing them to look for work;

(4) refuses to support the Government in its naked cost cutting that entrenches people with disability on welfare; and

(5) calls on the Government to work with the ALP on a bipartisan basis to achieve real welfare reform”.

This country and this society desperately need real welfare reform. We need a community, a whole of government and a political commitment to welfare reform. The cohesion of our society depends on it. Too many people in recent years have been trapped in a welfare trap—one created by the tax system and one created by the vicious cuts to rehabilitation and training schemes in this community. We have to invest now in resolving this situation, otherwise we will pay a lot more down the track. We have to invest now in our future social cohesion. We have to invest, because these people deserve
a fair go, and they have not been getting it. We have to address the unmet need in the community that has so punished and excluded tens of thousands of people with political disability.

We genuinely make this commitment: if the government comes to its senses, if it gets behind the spirit of the McClure reforms, we will sit down with it and negotiate genuine welfare reform which rewards work over welfare and which invests in the capacity of all our citizens but, more than that, respects their dignity to participate either in the work force or in our society. But if the government wants to continue to go down the low road, we will oppose it at every corner. Nothing could dishonour our tradition of a fair go more than this government hiding its political intent behind our armed forces. It has been trying to say that these cuts are necessary for the defence of the nation; we have exposed in this parliament how untrue that is. Nothing could more dishonour the Australian tradition than using the disabled as the shield to cover its financial mismanagement. You have undermined our common national purpose by singling out people with disabilities, particularly that group of 250,000, and using them as an excuse for the defence of the nation. You cannot defend your country while you are busy dividing it.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Jenkins)—Is the amendment seconded?

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

Mr BILLSON (Dunkley) (10.27 a.m.)—It is always a pleasure to follow the member for Lilley. He can stand in this place, make these claims and hope that some of the people listening had not heard what he had said on previous occasions or that someone in this place or some listener might not be aware that in this very chamber last night we were debating a package of measures totalling $1.7 billion over the next four years. This package will put in place the most courageous, visionary and needed infrastructure to provide support for people who face barriers to employment, to get them back into the work force, to get them back into society, to get them more socially engaged and, therefore, more fulfilled in their own lives, and to enhance their own wellbeing.

This may be the motive behind why these bills were separated: it enables those opposite to play this bookend trick, using the Labor language of talking in extremes. They say that these people who have been included in this program are going to be left to their own devices, disadvantaged and overwhelmed by this evil series of bureaucratic changes that are going to change the very landscape of this country, and they hope that nobody realises that there is a $1.7 billion package that sits alongside it. But when we were talking about the $1.7 billion package last night, the member for Lilley goes off and asks, ‘What if their personal needs are not taken into account? How dare you do these things to those people, asking them, when their youngest child turns 13, to come and have a chat about what their future opportunities are.’ It is the oldest trick in the book. They are hoping that nobody stops and listens and involves themselves in the whole package of policy measures that have come before this parliament. Instead, they cherry pick individual measures. They find the worst case they possibly could and then argue that that represents what is going on with 652,000 people in our community. It is the sort of nonsense that the electorate has grown tired of and, thankfully, most voters can see straight through it.

The same member for Lilley was the one who proposed a question on this to the Minister for Community Services back on 30 August 1999. So concerned was he about the same people whom he is here railing in support of that he proposed this question, saying to the minister:

Will you now admit that your real agenda is to make the unemployment rate look lower than it is by shifting people onto the DSP so that the unemployment rate looked lower—the same individual. He is scurrying out of here now, embarrassed by the revelation that he wants to have it both ways and thinks that the Australian public will not realise. He said in his
question that there was a ‘massive increase in the number of disability support pensioners’, with the government supposedly doing nothing to help those with a disability get back into employment. That was his argument; that was his point. His claim was that we were intentionally putting more people onto the DSP to reduce the unemployment rate, but he is in here today saying the exact opposite. People are growing tired of hearing that sort of argument from the Labor Party.

But perhaps the insight that he was referring to was what actually happened in the last three years under the Labor government, where we saw the greatest growth in the number of people on disability support pensions. It went up by 22.8 per cent in the last three years of the Labor government. Perhaps that was the motive that the member for Lilley was familiar with, and he was trying to impute that motive onto the government. I reject that motive and I reject his suggestion that there is some dishonour in the changes that we are seeking to implement through this package. It is about trying to work with people on the disability support pension to identify their capacities and to support them back into the work force; that is what the proposition is.

Last night I shared with the House some thoughts about the Australians Working Together package, and I praised the work being done by government and Commonwealth officials around the country to put the infrastructure in place. I particularly mentioned Centrelink because they will be the front-of-house providers of these changes, working alongside people and looking to see what programs there are to support them back into a fuller life. I should also emphasise that the Department of Family and Community Services are in the engine room of these changes, and I praise them for their work.

It is enormous transformation that we are seeking to implement. The idea is a simple one: if you are on a disability support pension, you should not be left to languish; you should not be forgotten about; you should not be just put to one side while our society, economy and community move on. It is an idea that says, ‘There are opportunities in our nation and we would like to enable people to exercise them as fully as possible.’ It is not the kind of idea that the member for Lilley was trying to suggest. It is not about taking people with profound disabilities and saying to them, ‘Go back out into the work force.’

The member for Lilley comes in here and talks about the unmet needs funding, again hoping that nobody remembers what actually happened. The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare identified a shortcoming in the services and programs available to support people with profound disabilities. They were talking about people who needed supported accommodation, who needed care, who needed support just to get through their daily lives; people who were going to adult life skills classes and adult training centres to improve their functionality. We are talking about people with profound disabilities. We are not talking about people who have a bad back. We are not talking about those that this measure is aiming to support.

We well recognise that, of the 652,000 people that are currently receiving the disability support pension, that is the most appropriate response that the government can provide. But we think that we can support the income support that is provided through the disability support pension by improved services to those people to enable them to live as full a life as possible. That extra money was coming from the Commonwealth. The risk which this measure is seeking to address is the simple idea that, if we have 652,000 and rapidly growing numbers of people on disability support pensions, the resources and the services available are spread very thinly. But if we focus on those with the greatest need, who need the highest level of care support, we can make sure that the resources are there to provide improved services. That is what this measure sits alongside.

The member for Lilley was talking about threats of cutting funding. No, the idea is that, if we can target the disability support pension to those who require it and support those that are able to be more involved in the workplace, the public resources that go to support people with profound disabilities can be targeted to those who most need it. Con-
cluding on that remark about the unmet needs funding: what the member for Lilley also failed to mention is that the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare identified that the unmet need was greatest in areas of supported accommodation, in areas of carer support and in ageing carers. Can you imagine spending 40 years caring for a loved one who has a profound intellectual disability? What a selfless thing to do. What a courageous thing to do. Those families need support— that is what this additional funding is about— because they cannot get into supported accommodation.

Under the Commonwealth-state disability agreement, the states are supposed to provide those services but, because they had fallen so far behind, the Prime Minister and Senator Newman provided national leadership to put Commonwealth funding in to meet the shortfall in state services, in supported accommodation, in life skills training, in carer support and respite. So the Commonwealth was actually putting additional resources in to address the shortcomings of service delivery at a state and territory level. That is what the additional funding is about. The proposition here is that, if we recklessly give away the disability support pension, those public resources cannot go in to supporting those with more profound needs who need those higher levels of care and support. That is what the discussion is about; that is what the member for Lilley chose to try to misrepresent to the Australian public once again.

It is probably lucky that the Howard government is overseeing these transformations. Mr Deputy Speaker, I am sure that you must have thought, ‘What is going on?’ when you heard the member for Werriwa saying that there should be only 150,000 people on the disability support pension. The member for Werriwa, one of the great thinkers of the Labor Party, actually argued that there are half a million people receiving the disability support pension who should not be. That was the Labor Party’s idea. Is that the partnership, the bipartisanism, that the member for Lilley is talking about? Does he want to adopt the road advocated by the member for Werriwa, where there are half a million people that he wants to get off the disability support pension? I hope that is not the kind of ‘bipartisan’ support the member for Lilley had in mind.

It is helpful to remind ourselves of the profile of people receiving the disability support pension. The member for Lilley talked about a young lady in her mid-30s with a range of conditions. The interesting thing is that 38 per cent of the 652,000 recipients are females and 62 per cent are male. Males overwhelmingly receive this service. Fifty-four per cent of those who receive this benefit are over the age of 50 and three-quarters are over the age of 40 so, in terms of what the member for Lilley was about, that is not an example that can be readily applied across the whole population. A third have a musculoskeletal condition. About a quarter have a psychological/psychiatric condition. About one in 10 are recorded as having an intellectual or learning difficulty.

What we are also talking about here is not ripping pensions off people but re-establishing what is reasonable as the basis for providing the disability support pension. Why are we doing that? The economy is changing and many people are involved in part-time work. Ten or 15 years ago it may well have been less common for people to have part-time work. Now many people have part-time work, and the idea here is to keep pace with those changes in the economy. An appropriate test is to say: is someone with a mild disability able to work 15 hours a week at award wages? At the moment the test is 30 hours a week: if you are not able to work 30 hours a week at award wages, you are able to apply for the disability support pension.

The proposition here is a 15-hour test at award wages, taking account of the changing nature of the labour market and also taking account of that $1.7 billion investment to help people develop their capacities. We should not be afraid of that idea. There are people running around saying this will affect people in sheltered workshops. That is not right. That is misleading people, because people working in sheltered workshops in
that kind of wage subsidised employment are not on award wages, so they are not going to be affected. It is wrong for people to run around the country pointing to that level of disability and saying, 'See what the Howard government’s doing: forcing these people to go on the dole.' That is not right—it is 15 hours at award wages. That measure comes in from 1 July 2003 so for about 12 months the current rules apply. After that time new applicants for the disability support program will have to be assessed against these new rules. People who currently receive the disability support pension will be able to continue on with that until such time as their condition is revisited in a periodic review.

That is not an unreasonable proposition, and all you have to do is actually look at some Labor Party comments to get an idea of that. I have mentioned briefly what the member for Lilley was asserting last time when he was talking with one side of his face: it was all a devious plot to shift people who are unemployed onto the DSP to make the unemployment numbers look lower. What are we doing now? Do we want to make the unemployment numbers look higher? No, we want to do the right thing for people with mild conditions who with proper support and assistance are more able to engage in a working life.

Look even further: the great irony was that the member for Bendigo, Mr Gibbons, actually put a question on notice to the parliament—one of so many examples of where a Labor Party member comes in here saying one thing and then asks a question like this saying another—as asking:

Are there plans to offer incentives for Disability Support pensioners who wish to establish their own businesses and work towards being self-employed and no longer requiring government assistance.

The answer is Australians Working Together. The answer is the kinds of measures that are being debated here today. Here is one of the Labor Party’s own people saying there is a capacity for people on the disability support pension to be supported in running their own business. That is the Labor Party for you! But you would swear this was a terrible idea that was going to change the very fabric of our society. This is the two-facedness that we come up against. It must be green carpet or media spotlight fever as they get all hot and bothered about these things and forget what they have said in the past. They come into this place, they front up to a television camera and say some of the most absurd things, forgetting that on the public record there are other comments.

In August 1999 the member for Shortland, probably following the lead given to her by the member for Lilley, was again asserting:

Could it be that the government is hiding the long-term unemployed by paying them the disability support pension?

That mischievous government is trying to put people onto the disability support pension—isn’t it evil! Here we are talking about the Labor Party accusing us of trying to take people off the pension. Aren’t we evil again? See how politics works? This is why people lose faith in the Labor Party. They are some examples of what members of the Labor Party have said, asserting points of view that there is a clear capacity for people who are on the disability support pension to be supported in more fulfilling areas of work, and that is what this idea represents.

We have before us an investment of $1.7 billion in the Australians Working Together package. We have before us assertions from the Labor Party that there are people on the disability support pension who should not be. We have the high-water mark of that argument being the member for Werriwa’s claim that instead of 652,000 DSP recipients it should be 150,000. I do know what he proposes for the half-million that the Labor plan advocated by the member for Werriwa would have cut off. I do not know what his plan is, but we have a proposition here of an adjustment to the rules that takes account of the changing nature of the labour market where there are increasing opportunities for part-time employment. What is the other choice? Is it having people simply withdraw from the labour market, to have them written off as incapable of contributing to our economy and encouraging them to detach themselves from our society? That is not what we want to do; that is the immoral thing to do. What we are doing here is working with people’s
abilities, recognising that some of the conditions for which a DSP can be awarded change over time, and recognising that people with a mild disability—with the proper support and encouragement—can actually be supported back into the work force.

Let us listen again to the member for Lilley’s comments. He was talking about the number of clients that went to the Commonwealth Rehabilitation Service. He was actually saying—talking about current services—that not many had gone, and he ratted off some numbers, saying, ‘Isn’t it terrible: not many people go to these services.’ What is the missing ingredient? Some encouragement and some incentives to use those existing services. So the member for Lilley, in the most erudite of his contributions, was actually supporting the government’s program: that at the moment even with those services in place people’s participation in and take-up of them is not as great as it possibly could be.

My final point, though, is to briefly touch on a recognised area which represents work in progress by the government. In between, there are about 8,000 to 12,000 disability support pensioners who are currently engaged in work at award wages between the 15 hours of what will be the future benchmark and the 30 hours that is the current benchmark. At this very moment I know the Prime Minister and the government and the responsible minister are identifying opportunities to make sure that the very incentive and encouragement that this measure is seeking to provide people to do that work is not diminished by this package. We do not want to discourage those people who are actually doing what this package aims to encourage by simply not handling the transition from the old rules to what is proposed under this package. I have been assured that that is our commitment: not to disadvantage and discourage those people who are doing exactly what we are trying to encourage through this package. We are seeking to accommodate their circumstances within the transitional arrangements.

I would like to thank those people in the Dunkley electorate who are in that situation who contacted me and illustrated their personal circumstances. They made it very clear to me how their motivation and how their self-esteem and positivity about what they are doing actually looked like running into a transitional barrier through this package. The government has recognised that. Minister Vanstone has made public statements that it is understood that some finetuning is needed on those transitional arrangements and that is to be encouraged and certainly supported.

Finally, in closing I guess the courteous thing to do is to encourage the House to disregard the amendment put forward by the Labor Party and moved by the member for Lilley. That is the nice thing to do; the courteous thing to do; the decent thing to do. The laughter that it would probably generate and the irony that it represents is probably something that is best discussed by others. It is quite remarkable: the naked, bald faced hypocrisy that this amendment represents, moved by a person whose last meaningful contribution—last vigorous contribution; I cannot say it was meaningful—to this debate was to accuse the government of pushing people onto the DSP in order to minimise the unemployment rate. That was a very disingenuous comment but it again highlights that there are not a lot of new ideas and thinking from the Labor Party on this subject.

I would encourage the House to flatly reject the amendment moved by the member for Lilley and I would encourage all those people who share my goal of wanting to support people and their capacities to get behind these bills. (Time expired)

Ms ELLIS (Canberra) (10.47 a.m.)—I am pleased to have the opportunity this morning to address the Family and Community Services Legislation Amendment (Disability Reform) Bill 2002 and to fully support the words of my colleague in this debate and also the amendment moved by him. The government’s second reading speech says, amongst other things:

Schedule 1 of the bill makes changes to the legislative framework governing qualification for disability support pension, building upon the changes announced in the Australians Working Together package.

In the minister’s budget material much is said about record support for people with
disabilities. I will come back to that ‘record support’ statement a little later.

I want firstly to concentrate on what this bill is going to mean to people, real people, people out there living with disability, people caring for them, people in the community providing services to people with disability. I want to reflect on how the government, the Prime Minister and his colleagues have worked at what I believe has been marginalising this group of Australians.

It began the very week of the budget when the Prime Minister began using words like ‘rort’, ‘fraud’ and ‘people prepared to rort the system’ when discussing these initiatives in this very place. It then progressed to talk of people with bad backs, connecting them to the above comments. In fact, any opportunity seemed to be used to imply that the increase in the number of disability support pension recipients was due to fraud and rorting and so on.

This was capped off with what I think was a disgraceful contribution by the Minister for Workplace Relations during an interview he gave on the ABC’s Lateline on Friday 17 May:

We’re only doing this because we know and Labor knows and all the thoughtful commentators know that something has to be done to tackle this constant cost blow-out. When you’ve got for instance, a suspected Al Qaeda terrorist on the disability support pension, our taxpayer dollars at work are keeping someone working for Al Qaeda. You’ve obviously got a problem and you need to address it.

If the government are somehow admitting here by using all this language that they have failed to address questions of fraud then they should in fact do something about fraud. Attacking all DSP recipients is not the way. I believe it to be dishonourable and dishonest.

It is a sad state affairs when the government chooses to see and to represent to the community people in receipt of DSP in this light. To attempt to marginalise them with this sort of language is contemptible. There is no doubt that a reform process is needed and that we need to look carefully at it how our welfare system is operating. However, the manner in which the government is going about it through this bill and these attitudes frankly is not on.

Given that there has been some talk about rorters, frauds and bad backs, let us think about the categories of disability which actually qualify people for the disability support pension. They include: developmental delay; intellectual and physical disabilities, which cover a very wide range; acquired brain injury; deafness; sight impairment; and psychiatric illness, amongst many others. The point is this: all these labels represent real people, all different, with varying levels of need, dependency, ability and support. Many of these people are already out there achieving a great deal for themselves and for this community. Some are in the paid work force and some are in social enterprise. What we should be doing is supporting and encouraging more of those people into those activities. To reduce their income, to threaten them, to marginalise them, is not what I would call encouragement or support. This is not welfare reform; this is welfare blame.

The Minister for Family and Community Services has already conceded that there are problems in this bill—and this was referred to by the previous speaker—that have unintended consequences for people who currently work and receive DSP, particularly if they work 15 or more hours a week. Frankly, this should have been realised, foreseen and eliminated much earlier in the process. I believe the government has missed a major point in this whole debate. You cannot assume that the majority of people on DSP do not want to participate—quite the contrary. But to participate you need support, you need security of income, you need security of living arrangements and, importantly, you need access to the work or to the job being spoken about. While some employers are very responsive to the disability sector and employ people with disabilities, many do not employ people with disabilities. In some cases the workplace may not be safe for some people, or may not in fact be accessible. Whatever the reason, employers will have to be part of the government’s grand plan. Sadly, I do not recall hearing or seeing much on that particular part of this debate.
Of course, it is under this very government that we have seen the number of people with disability permanently employed in the Australian Public Service drop by almost 35 per cent since June 1995. If reform is done properly, receiving the DSP can actually assist that participation. It offers stability. It provides the knowledge that if, in attempting to push your boundaries and participate in paid or other work, you encounter difficulties down that path you have the DSP to support you. It is a guaranteed income while you continue in your efforts. I say to the government: if you must set up hurdles, set them up with the lowest in front and grade them up, recognising achievement as it is gained. This government’s way seems to be to set up an enormous hurdle right up front, fraught with difficulty.

Some of the personal stories that have come to me in recent weeks and days have been pretty impressive. Despite disability, people are getting on with their lives and contributing successfully. However, some of the stories starkly illustrate their understandable objections to this bill and this government’s action. There is the family with two young men aged 20 and 30, both of whom were born profoundly deaf. Both are in receipt of DSP and both work part-time hours—varying from nil to 25 hours a week, depending on the hours available from their respective employers. I understand the relationship between the boys and their employers is a valued and respectful one. I call them boys because that is how their mother refers to them. If they are assessed as able to work more than 15 hours a week, what will happen if their current employers cannot offer any more hours? Given their language difficulties—profoundly deaf at birth explains that—who will provide the fully qualified interpreter for them as they go about the Job Network merry-go-round? What will happen to their confidence throughout this process?

Then there is the young woman with Down syndrome, working hard and achieving much. She receives DSP and she is currently working eight hours a week. She and her family hope that she will continue to make gains and, over time, be offered more hours of work. She is encouraged to manage her own life and to make her own decisions—but all with the support of family and the income security of the DSP. She may not be assessed at the 15-hour level right now.

Mr Cadman—She won’t be.

Ms ELLIS—Exactly. But what if you force her beyond her ability at any time? You stand to undo all her wonderful achievements. We must also consider people with chronic illness who are in receipt of DSP. Many people in this situation work; however, only when they are well enough to do so. Of course, this may fluctuate a great deal. The 15-hour level will make it very difficult for many of them. The National Association of People Living with AIDS has made it very clear that those with chronic illness and fluctuating working hours need flexible rules which will encourage participation, not complicate or discourage it.

I want to go back to the minister’s comments about record support for people with disability. In the minister’s press release on budget night, she stated:

Funding available to the States and Territories for specialist disability services, delivered through a third Commonwealth State Territory Disability Agreement (CSTDA), rises from $1.9 billion to $2.7 billion for the next five year Agreement. This represents a $743 million increase over the previous five year Agreement. It needs to be understood that, in July 2000, at a meeting of all ministers for disability, the federal government agreed that the next CSDA, to be signed in June this year, would include ‘the significantly increased Commonwealth-state contributions to address unmet need in the last two years of the current agreement’ and would maintain the ‘current base funding levels for disability services under a third CSDA’. Both the joint communiqué issued at that meeting and the then minister’s press release release of 25 July 2000 confirm that agreement. This means that the $547 million over five years allocated in this month’s budget for the next CSTDA is not new money at all but a continuation of that funding arrangement. In effect, it represents a virtual freezing at that prearranged level. The minister also goes to great lengths to claim that rising costs in the delivery of services to people with disabili-
ties is covered by indexation built into the CSDA to cover all sorts of cost increases.

The debate surrounding the SACS Award in New South Wales is an example of this government refusing to acknowledge their role in addressing the financial pressures faced by states and territories and service deliverers across the country. As ACROD has said:

... service providers have had to absorb, among other things: significant insurance hikes, increased compliance costs resulting from the New Tax System, the cost of increased administrative and reporting requirements and, in some States, a large (and, at best, partly funded) increase in wage costs as a result of changes to the Social and Community Services Award—

in other words, the SACS Award. ACROD goes on to say:

In addition, organisations have had to stretch their existing grants to provide extra services to clients whose needs intensify as they grow older and frailer. All these non-discretionary costs should be reflected in a realistic funding and indexation formula to ensure sustainable service delivery.

The negotiations currently under way for the next Commonwealth, state and territory disability agreement, the CSTDA, to be finalised by the end of June, simply must be approached by the minister and this government in a constructive and honest way, showing leadership in the area of service delivery for people with disability.

We now also have the preposterous situation where the minister is demanding that, unless this bill that we are debating today is passed, the Commonwealth funding offer to the states and territories through that disability agreement will not be met. She said:

... the additional CSTDA money is contingent on the reforms being passed by Parliament.

On Channel 7 on 26 May the minister said:

We’ve told the Senate... that additional moneys are dependent on these reforms getting through. The days have gone when the Democrats and the Labor Party can just... say, ‘Oh well, we’re not going to pass this,’ and then expect a lot of money to go into the disabled population...’

Not only do this government want to force people with disability onto lower levels of income; they also want to use people with disability as a ransom to get what they want. This is unprecedented in the welfare assistance field, where funding to the states’ and territories’ Commonwealth, states and territories disability agreement is contingent on the parliament passing proposed legislative reforms to a Commonwealth program.

The Paraplegic and Quadriplegic Association of Queensland had the following to say about this state of affairs:

The Howard government is playing with people’s lives. Not two years ago the government committed an additional $100 million that would be recurrent money under the third CSTDA. Now the government is saying it will renge on that promise if the parliament does not pass its budget proposals for changes to the disability support pension and PBS scheme. To every single member of the federal coalition we say: how dare you let your party treat people with disability with such contempt.

The National Council on Intellectual Disability also have grave concerns. They have said:

In his budget last night Mr Costello has added to the daily hardships that confront many people with disability and their families. In his budget the Coalition Treasurer promised ‘new’ funding of $500 million for unmet needs over the next 5 years. This is not new money but only funding to maintain services that people have received for the last year!

Catholic Welfare Australia said:

Tightening eligibility to the Disability Support Pension will see thousands forced onto unemployment benefits with the associated reduction in payment levels and exposure to activity testing and the breaching regime.

They went on to say:

The Treasurer does well to turn national attention to the sort of Australia we want in 40 years. However, the vision he outlines is chilling... A vision for Australia that sees no place for those who are the vulnerable is no vision at all.

Another association that has had a lot to say about this is NAPWA, the National Association of People Living with HIV/AIDS—and I referred to them earlier on. A great number of their constituents actually exist with the support of the DSP payment but float in and out of work, willingly and keenly, as their illness allows them to. They have said:
Such jobs are keeping them above the poverty line and are allowing them to make some contribution to the workforce currently. They will not have the physical capacity to increase these hours in many cases and will feel compelled to have to give up their employment to stay on the pension.

I also heard from a woman in my electorate who suffers from mental illness. She has borderline 15-hour a week employment. Her part-time job is relatively well paid but on DSP she can maintain that employment economically and live a reasonable life with a combination of the two. If she were forced to Newstart, the taxing regime would mean that to maintain employment she may need to consider giving up because she will not qualify for the Newstart. That is because on Newstart you can earn up to $62 per fortnight, which will be taxed at 50c in the dollar for every dollar earned, and up to $142 and then you lose 70c in the dollar, and you also get a health care card. On DSP you can earn up to $112 per fortnight and then you lose only 40c in the dollar. Above that it is fine, with no further limit, and you also get a pensioner concession card. So we are talking about the change in the income limit but we are also talking about those other aspects as well, which simply must be taken into consideration.

I also heard from an ex-teacher in Queensland who suffers from bipolar disorder. He worked for 23 years as a teacher. He has been married 32 years and has raised two fine children. He emailed me with his enormous concerns about the pressure he now feels he is under as a result of what the changes mooted here may mean for someone like him.

The government believes that with few exceptions this bill is fair. If you are within five years of retirement age or if you obviously cannot work, they argue that is fair. I am not sure what their definition of disability means yet because we are hearing 'profound', 'mild'—it is all to be looked at. We look forward to seeing that detail.

But the government is missing the point. As I said earlier, the people and the range of disabilities are vast—differing needs, supports and abilities. Force these people onto Newstart and you must guarantee all the supports, resources, training places, professional assessments and understanding of individual circumstances—all of that. In other words, frankly, it would require an open chequebook. The problem with that is quite simple: this is a savings measure; there is no open chequebook. On behalf of the people with disability out there, we on this side feel absolutely compelled to reject outright this piece of legislation despite all the words from, particularly, the previous speaker, who spent most of his time actually attacking the Labor Party and very little, if any, time answering the sorts of questions that I have raised in my contribution here today.

People want to participate; they want to take part in their communities. Those who are doing so are doing so with great success. Those who are not may have very good reasons. Compulsion, force, putting barriers in front of them, is not the way to do it. The way to do it is to encourage them and support them, to nurture them, to offer them every understanding and say to them, ‘If it does not work, the DSP is there for you and your family to rely upon. It is there to catch you.’ Do not punish people by assuming that you have to force them out. Reward them by assuming that you can encourage them. You will be surprised to find that a great number of them want to do it. But they will not be able to do it if you confine the parameters around them so tightly that they find the choice is: get out there and work or stay on the DSP—you cannot mix the two. That is a disastrous outcome. I thoroughly and absolutely endorse the amendment moved by my colleague the member for Lilley and I look forward to hearing further debate on this bill.

Mr CADMAN (Mitchell) (11.07 a.m.)—I begin my remarks on the Family and Community Services Legislation Amendment (Disability Reform) Bill 2002 by saying that I am amazed that the previous speaker, the member for Canberra, has not taken the time or the effort when she says she is so concerned about people with disabilities to look at the total package of the provision of personal care and assistance and the extra funding that is offered in this package for disabled people. It is a thoughtful process.
that has many facets, but for political purposes the Australian Labor Party is saying, ‘We are going to reject the lot.’ You are not prepared to consider any of it. Mr Deputy Speaker Causley, I was not referring to you. I know that you are a thoughtful, compassionate person and, coming from the area of New South Wales that you do, I know that you would also be concerned, as the government is, about the sudden large increase in the number of people on disability pensions.

We have got a larger number of people on disability pensions in proportion to our population than any other OECD country, so we ought to be having a look at it. We are having a look at it, and this is the proposal to fix it. Patrick McClure in his comments on the budget said that he welcomes the budget and he welcomes the fact that there is a change in the way in which this is being looked at. He did, I admit, say that he wanted to look at the details, and the details are being released by the minister. But let us go back over the record of what used to be called invalid pensions.

The invalid pension was wiped out in 1991 by the Labor government. They were the ones that said, ‘We’re going to have a disabled pension scheme.’ These were the rules: impairment of at least 20 per cent against an impairment table. So you had to be impaired in your capacity in some way or another by 20 per cent, or you had to have an inability to work on full award wages for 30 hours per week for the next two years. Those were the rules introduced in 1991. I believe the minister who introduced that measure might have been Graham Richardson. This was going to change the black and white, strict measures that were used for the invalid pension: capacity became the measure, rather than medical inability. So we changed, and the change has been fascinating. From 1991 until now there has been a threefold increase in expenditure in this area. In 1991 the nation spent $2.8 billion on disability pensions; in 2002-03 we will spend $6.9 billion on disability pensions. In 1991 there were 334,234 participants; today there are 652,170. That massive increase indicates, as I have said previously, that in relation to this payment we are at the highest level of any nation of a similar standard.

Let us have a look at it. One of the things that is drawn to our attention is the range of groups that are now receiving the disability support pension. There has been a huge increase in the numbers of young people. I do not know whether that increase in young people relates to another table that I have which shows the medical conditions applying to DSP pensions, but I do know that the musculoskeletal and connective tissues, which could be bad backs, legs, arms or whatever, are the prime reason for people being on the disability support pension.

The second most significant reason for people being on the disability support pension—and it sits closely behind that of muscular damage—is psychological and psychiatric illnesses. In a week or two this House will have the opportunity to have exposure to the Rotary forum program that looks at mental illness in Australia. It is very interesting that at the same time as this gradual increase in mental illness the biggest increase in people on the disability grant tends to be young people. I do not know whether there are a number of things working together here that we need to come to grips with, but I certainly know that drug abuse and marginalisation—some would say poverty; I would say probably lack of opportunity and guidance—may all have had a compounding effect with the young and may be the reason that such a large proportion of young people are suddenly on the disability support pension. The other large group is at the other end of the age spectrum—the 60- to 65-year-olds—which is understandable. All evidence points to the fact that these may be older unskilled males who have been forced out of the workplace with little opportunity of further employment. So, rather than being eligible for an age pension, they are put onto a disability support pension.

What has the government said? The government has looked at what the rules are now for this massive increase in the number of people and the cost of the disability support pension and said, ‘Let’s look at the rules. The rules say impairment of at least 20 per cent against an impairment table and an in-
ability to work in full-time award for 30 hours a week for the next two years.’ The government has said, ‘What is the difference between 30 hours and 38 hours? Can anybody reasonably be expected to measure a person’s capacity to work 30 hours as compared with 38 hours?’

To my mind, that is an impossibility. I do not think that somebody working four days cannot work five days, but there is a big difference between working 15 hours—or a couple of days a week—and working a full week. So the government have said, ‘We are going to apply a test of 15 hours per week.’ They are not changing any of the other tests—just the 30 hours down to 15 hours. It is reasonable to apply a test and see how it works out. The fact of the matter is the growth in DSP has been by young people and males who have been unskilled and cannot be retrained or have not been retrained.

The government is not just cutting people off from this process. What the government is saying is, ‘We have a complete package of $700 million, plus another $230-odd million, making over a billion dollars in this disability area alone, to help and compensate for the process of change.’ This is not a saving factor. There are some savings in the budget, but they are minimal when you assess them against the government expenditure over the next five years to compensate and put in place reasonable programs to help people that ought to be helped. Dumping people on the disability pension is not an answer for young people with perhaps a mental illness. Nobody on the Australian Labor Party side of this House has bothered to go into places—whether they be sheltered workshops or places of employment for the disabled—or even to contact organisations such as Employers Making A Difference to make an assessment. These are the organisations that are out there proving that people with disabilities can be employed and can make a big difference, even if they would normally, under the rules that this government is going to apply, be eligible for a disability pension.

This $1 billion increase, combined with the $250 million increase in funding for disability assistance announced last year in the Australians Working Together package, confirms that we are committed to the wellbeing of people with disabilities. If the opposition would care to listen—instead of playing politics with the process, because, after all, this is not an event that is going to happen tomorrow; it is going to happen in over a year’s time—and if they were prepared to work through the process and block it in a year’s time, maybe that would make some sense. But no, they are going to block it now. They do not understand it. They do not understand it. They do not want to understand it, but they are going to block it straightaway. What a crazy way of making decisions. They call themselves a responsible opposition. No wonder they have the tag ‘Simon and the Creanites’. They just cannot make sense.

This is the way the disability pension is going to be paid in the various areas and how people are going to be assisted: 17,200 people in disability employment will receive the Commonwealth-state package of support; 37,600 will go into the Job Network. If people have not got a job, they will be required to look for one. They will be paid and supported. If they get a job offer they might have to take it. If they refuse it, their pension will be reduced a bit. If they refuse three offers of employment, they might go off benefit for eight weeks. There is a bit of a choice there, I would have thought. It means that 37,600 people have the option of going into the Job Network, with people working for them, trying to help them find employment and giving them retraining opportunities. Then they have to get a job offer before they would go off the benefit. It seems fair to me. There are 14,700 people who are going into rehabilitation places, and that is proper care for people anxiously looking for support. There will be 3,200 places in the Personal Support Program, which is intensive and compassionate. There will be 600 places in the language, literacy and numeracy program and they are all going to have access to Centrelink personal advisers, who will provide guidance and help for them to prepare for work, and access to appropriate support services. There will be better assessment into whether reskilling can help, particularly for the older age group. There will be an additional $33 million to the states and territories
for mainstream vocational education and training places.

All in all, this is a reasonable approach to the growth of a problem which we have ducked. We, as a community and as a parliament, have refused to look at this because we have said that it is easier to put people on disability payments rather than cope with their real problems. It was much easier for the Australian Labor Party when they introduced it in 1991 to dump people onto this pension and say, ‘We have got unemployment falling.’ That is the way it started; that is the way it was done. The honourable member who is going to speak next would not remember that. That was the way Paul Keating was able to strut into this parliament saying—

Ms Hall—I looked into this area when Paul Keating was Prime Minister.

Mr CADMAN—how good he was for the Australian people and how many jobs he had produced. He was reducing the unemployment figures: he was taking people off Newstart and putting them on to disability services, and that is why we have these large numbers. That is why it has to be dealt with, and it is going to be dealt with in a compassionate and sensible way.

The House needs to understand that the extra funding is contingent on the legislation passing. It appears to me that the Australian Labor Party just want things to go on as they are. The Australian people need to be aware of that. They need to know that the Australian Labor Party have no ideas, no policy—just obstruction. They are not concerned about people with disabilities and how they can be assisted. There is not one extra new idea in any of this debate about how things can be improved. ‘We are going to cut the extra money; we are going to cut the extra counselling; we are going to cut the personal support programs; we are going to cut the rehabilitation programs; we are going to cut the language, literacy and numeracy places; we are going to remove the access to Centrelink personal advisers; we are going to cut the better assessment for reskilling; we are not going to supply the additional $33 million to the states and territories for mainstream vocational education’—that is the attitude of the Australian Labor Party. They would prefer to deny access by disabled people to $1.3 billion to assist in this process than to think about how a change could be made for the better.

This bill will go off to the Senate, it will rumble around in a Senate committee and the Leftist element of the Australian Labor Party will be waxing lyrical about what a terrible thing it is. But will they apply their minds to finding a better way? No, never—that has not entered their heads. Will the Australian Labor Party apply their minds to how we can give disabled people access to an additional $1.3 billion? No, they would rather play politics with disabled people and disadvantaged people who deserve help. I believe it is time that the Australian Labor Party really examined the budget papers and the processes that have been thought about by the government. I would like to quote Patrick McClure. In an interview on 16 May—I have the transcript here—he said:

When you look at the issue of disability support pension, as you rightly point out, there are 650,000 people on it, and so it’s a substantial outlay of income support payments. What the McClure report recommended—and we also welcome in this budget—is better assessment of individuals as they apply for a disability support pension.

That is from the man who conducted the inquiry for the government—the person from Mission Australia who was responsible for bringing forward some suggested changes—and the government has moved in this one area. That brings down all the comments and criticisms from the Australian Labor Party.

In closing, I want to point to a better way in which things have been done and the prospects for the future. I have mentioned the organisation Employers Making a Difference—EMAD it is called. The mission of this organisation is:

To facilitate and support employers to lead the change to a positive employment environment for people with a disability.

It was established by a dear man Steve Bennett. It is now nationwide and powering on because the differences that people with disabilities can make in regular employment are quite staggering when this is actually
EMAD says there are four good reasons for employing somebody with a disability:
1. It works for your company:
   • To develop a culture of inclusion.
   • To recruit from the biggest pool of skills.
2. It works for your customers:
   • To reflect your customer base—Anybody can be your customer, so you need to have people working for you who represent your customers—
   • To benefit from improvements in the workplace.
3. It works for sales:
   • 1 in 4 customers in Australia have family members with a disability—Pizza Hut recorded measurable sale increases through its hiring of over 14,000 people with a disability in the United States.
   That trend is happening here in Australia. It continues;
4. It works for the bottom line:
   • Because people with a disability often make better workers—
   and there is research to demonstrate that—
   • To minimise your exposure under the Disability Discrimination Act—measures that may apply to people exhibiting discrimination.

As I said, research was undertaken in Australia at the instigation of Cavill and Co, Australia’s leading cause related marketing agency by Worthington Di Marzio—an Australian research and strategic planning group. It identified that 49 per cent of customers felt they would change from their regular brand to one that supported a worthy cause and 75 per cent of respondents said they would buy a cause related product or service. The fact is that the report—back from employers who employ people with a disability—shows they are more reliable, they can do their work better and they are more conscientious and enthusiastic for their jobs. Companies such as IBM and Telstra are leading the way. We should be proud of these employers that are leading the way because they are showing us how to do it. That is what the government is on about: opportunities for people—broadening their opportunities, not locking them away or having them lying around the place on a disability pension. That is soul destroying.

John Temple, an Australian who earned the Order of Australia—a cerebral palsy sufferer—talked about the able bodied and the disabled, and he is one. He can do lots of things: he can drive bulldozers, trucks, cars, front-end loaders—everything. He built his own house and now runs a business on the Central Coast. He met Bob Hawke and Bill Hayden when Bill Hayden was Governor-General, and they applauded his determination and commitment that John Temple has to be able to care for himself and have the pride to progress, even though he suffers from a terrible disability. *(Time expired)*

Ms Hall (Shortland) *(11.28 a.m.)*—I certainly hope I bring a little bit more knowledge based information to this debate than the previous speaker, the member for Mitchell—information and knowledge based on facts, not selectively chosen statistics. I rise to oppose the Family and Community Services Legislation Amendment (Disability Reform) Bill 2002. This legislation is the most disgusting piece of legislation that any government could possibly introduce. It is about inflicting pain on the most vulnerable people in the community. It is about cost cutting by an uncaring, hard-headed, mean-spirited government.

The Howard government is using the McClure report—selectively using the McClure report—to justify the draconian, cost cutting measures in this bill. This legislation is not about empowering and assisting people with disabilities to find jobs, it is not about assisting with training or retraining and it is not about removing negative stereotyping that prevents people with disabilities from getting a job; rather, it is about cost cutting, stigmatising and reinforcing the stereotype of people with certain disabilities—stereotyping that portrays people with back injuries as frauds and rorters et cetera.

This government overspent prior to the election last year—we all know that; it is common knowledge in the Australian community. It went on a spending spree to buy votes. As a result, people with disabilities now have to pay. I think that is very sad indeed. This legislation amends the current
work test that applies to people with disabilities who apply for the disability support pension or who are having their entitlements reviewed. Under the definition of ‘work capacity’, their ability to work is reduced from 30 hours to 15 hours a week. At face value, that seems like a very reasonable action to take, but I will show how it will work against people with disabilities finding jobs, impinge on their quality of life and reduce their ability to find work.

That definition of ‘work capacity’ removes the ability to consider local labour market conditions for people aged over 55. That is a real concern in an area such as the one I come from, where we have high unemployment, and it should be of real concern to the responsible minister too. That allows for—and it has happened at various times under different workers compensation legislation—a person over 55 to be deemed suitable to work as a lift driver. The fact that there may be only one lift driver position in the whole area is irrelevant. Because a person is deemed able to work for 15 hours a week as a lift driver or gatekeeper or in some such position, regardless of the fact that the job is non-existent, they are deemed ineligible to receive the disability support pension.

For over 10 years I assisted people with disabilities to find jobs, and at Newcastle university I lectured prospective rehabilitation counsellors on the best ways for people with disabilities to secure jobs. Believe me, this bill is not the way to achieve a positive outcome for people with disabilities. People with disabilities are very vulnerable. They feel disempowered and they have lost capacity or have reduced or limited capacity. The government’s response to that is absolutely despicable. The government are going to punish them and then maybe there will be some assistance. I will talk a little more about the type of assistance that is going to be offered, about the training of the workers and about people with disabilities being able to secure the assistance that they need.

The response needed is an empowering one and, believe it or not, it is going to cost money—it is not about reducing money. This government have approached the issue of helping people with disabilities to find work by cutting costs rather than putting in money and resources. It will cost them more money. They will spend more money on people with disabilities if they truly want to get them back into the work force. The government have created a lose-lose scenario for people with disabilities. They are not only going to find it harder to find work but also suffer a reduction in the money they receive. They will lose their health care cards.

It is important to remember that people with a disability actually have a disability. In many cases, their disability requires them to visit doctors on a more regular basis than able-bodied people. They need more medication than able-bodied people need. They are going to lose their pharmaceutical benefits and their telephone allowance. Believe me, people with disabilities require a telephone—in some cases more than people without disabilities require a telephone. The way in which the disability support pension is taxed compared with the way in which Newstart is taxed will be another thing that will create insecurity for those people. There is absolutely no guarantee that a person with a disability will be placed in an appropriate program.

I received a letter from the Physical Disability Council of New South Wales—people who really understand the issues that people with disabilities face. I am sure the council have written to all members of this House, urging us to do everything in our power to oppose and stop the proposed legislation that we are discussing here today. They point out that it is ‘misconceived, mean-spirited and fatally flawed’. The council’s letter points out that in this legislation the government are not looking to the individual needs of a person with a disability and it states that there is
a ‘need for an individualised allowance that meets the non-discretionary, additional costs of living with a disability’—that is, costs like the ones I referred to before, such as increased reliance on the health system and on pharmaceuticals.

They say that people with disabilities can work and want to work, and I reiterate that time and time again. Over the years I have worked with people with disabilities and they all wanted to work. When you talked to people and assisted them to get into the work force, the first thing they would say is, ‘I want a job. I want any job. I just want to get back to work. I want to be like everybody else.’ This bill will not assist them achieve that. According to the Physical Disability Council, the barriers that prevent people from doing so are systemic and not individual. The council says that systemic barriers constrain the lives of people with disabilities and prevent them from working and I agree with that.

The previous speaker referred to Pizza Hut as an employer of people with disabilities. However, this letter points out that employers have a hostile attitude towards people with disabilities. I would argue that very strongly. I have rung employers, called on them and canvassed them actively for over 10 years and I know that one of the most difficult things to do is convince an employer that they should offer a job to a person with a disability. There is always an excuse. If they are faced with an able-bodied person beside somebody with a disability, they choose the able-bodied person every day unless the appropriate incentives are in place. That is what is wrong with this legislation—the lack of incentives. It is a very punitive bill which does not look at those issues.

The Physical Disability Council also refers to the social and economic infrastructure of employment remaining problematical, unreasonable and burdensome. It states that workplaces are not fully accessible and that there are problems with transport. It also refers to workplace attitudes and the hostility of people towards people with disabilities. Believe me, if someone walks into a workplace and says, ‘I’ve got a disability,’ their co-workers say, ‘Yes, what’s wrong?’ The person answers, ‘I’ve got a back injury.’ The workplace may have been set up for that person with a special chair and perhaps reduced working hours so they can adapt to the environment. However, time after time, the co-workers turn against that person because there is no proper education program or support within the workplace. It is absolutely disgraceful that this government can look at improving the employment opportunities for someone with a disability by reducing the number of hours that they are required to work to get a disability pension. That is absolutely despicable.

The McClure committee, the Physical Disability Council of Australia and ACOSS have set out complementary, economically productive and sustainable means by which you can invest in the future of people with a disability. This legislation does not do that in any shape or form. I have received a letter from a constituent who is on a disability support pension. He says:

Whilst I agree in principle to the idea of pensioners working ... it is almost impossible for them to obtain work.

He then lists some points and then says:

Much as I would love to go back to work, it is impossible.

On many days, there is nothing to distinguish me from any other male in the community.

I can walk normally, do most things normally. BUT, there is no way that I could guarantee that tomorrow I will be able to even stand up. I have a back problem, which shows up on Xrays and depending on weather conditions, what I have been doing, and a host of other factors I range from feeling good varying to total incapacitation. Under these circumstances, WHO WOULD EMPLOY ME?!!

I have worked in a back care education team and I know the problems that people with back injuries have in coping with their day-to-day lives. In that letter, my constituent talks about a friend. He says:

A friend of mine has a heart condition. He is on the transplant list. To look at him, he is healthy, energetic and fit, but there are times that cannot
be predicted when he is incapacitated due to his condition.

He points out that, in his case, he has worked outdoors all his life and now he cannot even mow a lawn. He suspects that the vibration causes a problem. You can see that this has been an issue of great concern to people in the community. My office has been contacted by a number of people with disabilities. The concern is very similar for all the callers. I have emphasised back injuries a little. I have read in media reports that people suffering from back injuries are going to be targeted by this legislation. Only by creating a very supportive environment, putting in place proper assessments and making sure that the workplace is friendly to a person with a back injury will we ever achieve a positive outcome for them.

I worked with someone who was a labourer who injured his back. After undergoing a lot of retraining he ended up working in Centrelink. But he achieved that only because the appropriate programs were in place. It was not because this person was targeted and taken off the disability pension. He achieved that from the disability support pension.

One of the dangers with people with disabilities entering the work force is that they will re-injure themselves, exacerbate an existing condition or injure themselves in some other way. People with disabilities are often people with a strong work ethic who because of this strong work ethic have pushed their bodies beyond a certain point. So I think that one of the most important aspects of assisting people with disabilities to enter the work force is making sure that the workers are trained appropriately to be able to place them in a job. The worker must have not only a knowledge of the disability but an in-depth knowledge of the job. They must be able to conduct a complete job analysis and have knowledge of the type of workplace that will suit the person. If places are created, training positions are created and people are just shunted in, one after another into these types of programs without appropriately trained workers, people with disabilities are going to be in great trouble. They need individualised programs as set out in the McClure report. The McClure report points out that it is imperative that there are individually designed programs to deliver appropriate kinds of programs for people with disabilities. Without individualised programs, where you are looking at the person setting realistic goals and setting realistic outcomes that you hope to achieve, you will not get anywhere.

Back in the early nineties the Keating government introduced disability reform panels. These panels were set up in a cooperative approach and involved Centrelink, the Commonwealth Rehabilitation Service and the CES. Everybody that was on those panels worked together with the interests of the person that had a disability to actually move them from being in a situation where they were dependent and unemployed, or even unemployable in some cases, to a situation where they could actually enter the work force. You need this coordinated approach, and that is also set out in the McClure report, which says that it is imperative that everybody work together to break down the barriers and help people get back into the work force. Currently, this is not happening. This is not happening in any way. It is more a competitive environment. It is all about the various agencies getting money and not about the person with the disability.

I cannot remember being more angry about any piece of legislation introduced into the parliament. Not only does it stigmatise the people with a disability and reduce their income but it also places them at risk—risk of re-injury, risk of injury, hospitalisation and homelessness. This is a government that has no concept of appropriate programs that prepare and facilitate entry into the work force by people with disabilities. This is a government that has an election bill to pay and it is targeting people with disabilities, people who are vulnerable and easy for a mean-spirited government like this one to marginalise. This is contemptible, and the government stands condemned for its actions. (Time expired)

Mrs DE-ANNE KELLY (Dawson) (11.48 a.m.)—I rise to speak on the Family and Community Services Legislation Amendment (Disability Reform) Bill 2002. This bill gives effect to two measures an-
announced in the May budget. It has its genesis in the McClure report, which was handed down in August 2000. That report recommended that the government review the work capacity criterion for the disability support pension. The government’s response to McClure made it quite clear that it intended to address disability support pension qualification, particularly in the area of the capacity to work. It is clear that it is a growing problem which needed to be addressed. In the 1990s, Australia had the highest rate of growth in disability related payments of all OECD countries. There are presently 650,000 people on a disability support pension Australia. This number has been growing at the rate of around four per cent annually for the last four years. More disturbingly, almost half of all people granted a disability support pension are aged 50 years or over.

Before I address many of the matters raised by other colleagues, I would like to make clear the intention of the bill and what it will mean. For new applicants, it will mean that after 1 July 2003 a disability support pension will be payable only to those who have a very limited and restricted capacity to work—in other words, unable to work more than 15 hours at award wages a week. Most of those people who do not qualify will receive an alternative support payment such as the Newstart allowance. It will mean that those currently on the disability support pension will have their circumstances progressively reviewed over the following five years to ascertain whether they meet the criteria for new applicants. That review is to commence on 1 July 2003. Those who are within five years of aged pension age are not subject to this review.

Can I say what this bill will not mean. This bill will not mean that the arrangements for those people who are permanently blind will change. It will not mean that those who are genuinely disabled and unable to work are going to be in any way targeted, nor need they be concerned. It is another example of the total incapacity of those opposite to do anything other than indulge in cheap and opportunistic political stunts which hurt those who are vulnerable. It is another example of why they were so overwhelmingly rejected by the Australian people at the 2001 election and, no doubt, will be at the forthcoming election perhaps in 2004.

It is important now to understand why the government has taken the measures outlined in this bill. As I said before, in 1991, there were around 215,000 people on the disability support pension. There are now some 650,000 people, with the number growing at four per cent a year. This begs a number of questions because, in fact, this growth is faster than the growth of population. Are people becoming more disabled? Are we a nation which is not able to offer those who are in the work force or elsewhere the opportunity to avoid accidents? What is happening? Why is it apparent that the number of people on the disability support pension is growing faster than the rate of population,
particularly when half of those are over the age of 50 years?

An analysis of the medical conditions which enable claimants to be on the disability support pension reveals that the largest percentage—nearly one-third—falls into a category known as musculoskeletal and connective tissue conditions, more commonly known as bad back. Whilst there is no doubt that some of those—perhaps even the majority—have suffered an injury which prevents them from working, there is equally no doubt that there is a large percentage who are capable of undertaking either part-time or perhaps even full-time work, with some medical support and expert assistance. This is what the five-year review of current disability support recipients will determine. Are these people, in fact, capable of working 15 a week or more, or are they not? If they are not, their circumstances will not change. They have nothing to fear from this bill or from a government that rightly recognises that there is a problem that needs to be addressed. These people will be entitled to exactly the same benefits that they receive today.

More than that, the government will provide an additional $258 million over three years in support services such as employment assistance, rehabilitation and education and training to help them back into the work force. Significantly, it will also provide an additional $743 million in disability funding over five years for disability services, which is to be matched by the states. The states will also be required to provide increased and improved accountability of the way in which they spend the Commonwealth funding.

The most important thing here is to realise that all of these changes have a human face. I would like to share with other members today the stories of some of those who have come into my office in recent times. The mother of a young boy came to see me. The boy has Asperger’s syndrome, Tourette syndrome and some other disabling conditions. He goes to primary school. He is a loving burden for their family. The mother came to see me because she wants the best for her son. She actually is encouraged to believe—and I share her belief—that he can attain a degree of independence in the community and may even be able to undertake a career. Interestingly, this young lad wants to be a palaeontologist, of all things, which is great. To support this young lad with all his needs for specialist care and medication, she receives $85.30 a fortnight. An hour with one of the therapists that is needed to enable this young lad to regain a measure of independence as he grows is $100 an hour. Specialist services are quite costly, but of course he is under the age of 16.

Another parent who met with me has an intellectually impaired son in his 20s. Again, this mother’s great hope was that her son would be able to attain a measure of independence and be able to live outside the home. I am pleased to say that he has been able to do that, with support and care. The family are delighted, as the young man is as well.

Those are the people whose concerns we really need to address. The greatest desire of families and the profoundly disabled is to attain what measure of independence they can, to be able to interact with the broader community and, hopefully, if it is possible, to get some skills and to work to some extent, perhaps even full time. As a caring community, we should enable them to achieve that to the extent that they can. I am truly pleased to see this additional $743 million in funding for disability services. I hope that it will flow to the mother with the lad with Asperger’s syndrome and to parents such as those with intellectually impaired children. Quite frankly, those families face a huge challenge. As a caring society and a caring government, we should support them in their aspirations for their youngsters.

However, there is another side to this argument. People come into my office frequently and one in particular was obviously in some discomfort. They were looking for a hip replacement but were delaying it for various work related reasons and also because their private health insurance was not yet to a stage where they could go ahead with the operation. This constituent said to me, ‘Don’t worry; I’m planning to go on the disability support pension.’ I have to say to the House and those listening that, while the
constituent obviously had a painful medical condition, it was one that was treatable—and I trust that in the near future it will be—and it was not a reason to go on the disability support pension.

Another constituent, a young man, contacted my office. He had problems at work and problems with his union—the sorts of things that many young people encounter as they build their careers. He found them rather overwhelming and said, ‘But don’t worry; I’m going to go on the disability support pension.’ The disability support pension is not a means of avoiding facing challenges and difficulties in our work life. We all have them—every single Australian will have them at some time. They are not a way of sheltering from life’s realities.

With the last two cases that I have mentioned, because of privacy reasons I am not sure whether they were successful or not, but the important thing was that their attitude was that they should be successful. The disability support pension was a way of dealing with a medical condition that was treatable and of avoiding some difficulties at work. That is not an answer.

An older man with an engineering degree came into my office. He was quite a talented and skilful person and he had been on a disability support pension for some years; there was mention of some personality disorder. This gentleman raged at me because he was so frustrated. He said, ‘I have skills, I need training, I want to work and I can’t get it.’ I shared his frustration: he was obviously a man who wanted to make a contribution, he certainly wanted a higher income than he had and plainly he had skills. Obviously, after many years on the disability support pension, he needed additional training. This measure will give him the opportunity to get that and, more importantly, it will give him the opportunity to increase his income.

I would like to refer to another case: a young woman, again on the disability support pension, who was in her early 30s. A very attractive, intelligent and articulate young lady, she came into my office. Again, there was some mention of a personality disorder but, quite obviously, people’s privacy is something that none of us as members of parliament pry into. She was extremely bitter because she was finding it difficult as a young woman on a disability support pension to do the sorts of things that she wanted to do and was bitter that life seemed to be passing her by. That is the sort of person who should have the opportunity for training and acquiring more skills and the opportunity to move into the workplace. That is what we are about: a fairer balance—I was going to say ‘at both ends of the spectrum’. With the question of disability, there is obviously quite a broad range of cases and situations.

I think those cases exemplify those who have a medical condition and perhaps personal difficulties and are trying to avoid them. It is not an answer to go on the disability support pension. Those who have the capacity to work more than 15 hours a week should be encouraged to receive training—and we will encourage them to receive training—and to receive the sort of assistance and support they need to go out and lead a fuller life, to work part- or full-time, to increase their income, to enable them to take their place in the community. For those who are profoundly and genuinely disabled, we should be offering support to them and their families so that they can attain what independence they can—to perhaps even be able to work.

I want to cite the case of a constituent of mine with cerebral palsy. I realise that he is an exception, but quite often it is the exception that shows the rule. This gentleman is in his early 40s, he has cerebral palsy and he is in a wheelchair. He cannot speak. He is highly intelligent and he runs his own business in Mackay, my hometown. He loves being out in the community and he enjoys the interaction with others. He is an inspiration to everyone in town. As I said, he is probably an exceptional case, but he wanted to work and he wants to work. He sees it as his way of being part of the community and, of course, earning an income that is higher than he could earn on the disability support pension.

So there is that range of situations and real people. This is not a matter of legislation; it involves all of those real people out there in the community with a whole range of differ-
ent needs. I firmly believe that this legislation offers all of them the opportunity to enhance and grow their lives, whether they are profoundly and genuinely disabled or whether they are people who need to go out and attain more skills and take their place in the community, working. I am supportive of this because I see the problems in my own electorate office.

I would like to quote the Prime Minister. He said in the House:

This is a genuine attempt by this government to get control over a program that both the member for Werriwa—

I will get to the member for Werriwa in a moment—

and the member for Lilley have said is being rorted.

I believe that to be the case. The reality is that the opposition cannot have it both ways in this argument. They are going to try to support a surplus in the budget—that is laudable, and the government very much believes in surplus budgets—but, at the same time, they are going to block every measure that the government uses to attain that surplus.

Mr Hardgrave—Business as usual.

Mrs DE-ANNE KELLY—Business as usual: trying to have it both ways, trying to say to those out in the community in small business, the markets and so on, ‘Hey, look: we’re a responsible opposition,’ but then they go sneaking down to the Senate and into the House of Representatives and opposing every measure that would do that. They also do no good for those out in the community who need support and assistance.

Mr Hartsuyker—They love deficits.

Mrs DE-ANNE KELLY—That is right. I would like to quote—and it looks like it is going to have to be done fairly quickly as time is almost up—from an article in which the member for Werriwa said:

In particular, this is a problem for men approaching the last part of their working life. Among the advanced economies, Australia has the lowest rate of labour force participation for males over 55 years.

Referring to disability pensioners, he said:

Shamefully, we have given up on their chance of ever working again. One in every eight Australian men in their 50s has been classified as disabled. Even worse, among the 60-64 group, one in four is on the DSP—

that is, the disability support pension—

It is no way to repay an older generation by calling it disabled—

(Time expired)

Ms GEORGE (Throsby) (12.08 p.m.)—It gives me great satisfaction to be able to participate in the discussion on the Family and Community Services Legislation Amendment (Disability Reform) Bill 2002, a bill quite incorrectly named a reform bill because the contents of this bill are in fact incredibly regressive and affect those who are amongst the most vulnerable in our Australian society. Because I represent a seat that encompasses relative socioeconomic disadvantage—high rates of unemployment, particularly among young adult men—a seat that has a predominantly industrialised work force—people that have worked in very heavy industry—it is not surprising then that in Throsby over 5,000 of my constituents are in fact currently on the disability support pension. This issue has raised considerable concern and anxiety for these constituents and their families, and rightly so.

I say it is ironic that the bill refers to ‘disability reform’ because the government itself had a blueprint mapped out by the McClure committee, which came forward with a multitude of positive proposals to address the transition from welfare to work—among a number of matters that it considered—as well as giving consideration to the issue of disability and of the way that society needs to have an all-encompassing approach to try to effect that transition for many who are disabled but want to participate fully in society. But when you look at the content of this bill, all it really does is give legislative effect to the very mean-spirited and nasty cuts that were foreshadowed by the Treasurer in this year’s budget, a budget that is in deficit and a budget in which the weak and the vulnerable in Australian families are going to be asked to cover up the bottom line for the Treasurer and this government.

I find it pretty offensive that the member for Dawson alleges that the Labor Party is running a ‘scare campaign’ on this issue. I
think it is quite offensive to suggest that it is a scare campaign. Quite frankly, the government does not need to explain to members on this side of the House but really needs to explain to organisations like the Physical Disability Council of New South Wales and the Down Syndrome Association of New South Wales how it can defend these terribly mean-spirited and very regressive cuts. It is not we that need to be convinced; the government needs to convince the organisations out there that deal on a daily basis with the reality of the lives of people affected by a multitude of disabilities and which are now the focus of attacks by this government. Let me quote what the Physical Disability Council say, in case you think we are whipping up a scare campaign. They say in a letter received by many of us:

We believe that the action proposed by the Treasurer is mis-conceived, mean spirited and fatally flawed.

They go on to say:
None of what the Government proposes in its Budget address the fundamental points that emerged from the work of the McClure Committee’s inquiry into welfare reform.

... ... ...

We believe that most people with disability who can work want to work.

I re-emphasise that point because I also take great offence at the notion that people who have disabilities are somehow malingering on the public purse and not out there wanting to make the most productive contribution they can. As the Physical Disability Council rightly point out, the barriers which prevent them from working ‘are systemic, not individual’. They say:

Reducing eligibility for Disability Support Pension addresses none of the systemic barriers that constrain the lives of people with disability or prevent us, from time to time, from working.

So I suggest it is the government’s task to really address the genuine concerns that have been raised by a multitude of wonderful disability service providers that work with people on a daily basis, rather than engage in the kind of rhetoric that we have heard this morning.

Let me also say I noticed that the member for Dawson made reference to the notion that somehow all the people who are going to be forced to move onto the Newstart allowance are going to be all picked up by additional training places. Somehow the member for Dawson seems to have missed the fact that yesterday in this House, in a leaked cabinet document, what was made quite clear, and I quote from that document, was that ‘there will be no guarantee of access’ for ‘customers’—I think they used that word, which I also find offensive—‘to services to the people moved from disability support onto the Newstart allowance to find work’. So, despite the promise of all these additional places and the additional funding, your own government’s cabinet document proves the lie of that assertion by stating quite clearly that the estimated 200,000 people that we think will be very hard hit by this very mean-spirited attack on their income support will not of necessity be guaranteed to receive the assistance they will need for that transition to work.

What you are asking us to accept is that there is something fair about the loss of $52 a fortnight—in effect, a 12 per cent cut in income support for the most vulnerable in our community. I think it is an absolute disgrace that to cover up your budget deficit and the spending spree that you so recklessly engaged in in the lead-up to the federal election you are now asking Australian working families and the poor and those with disabilities to fund your bottom lines. I do not think the Australian community is going to accept that. I say this because you did not have the courage in the lead-up to the federal election to tell the electorate that this is what you had in mind.

It comes as no surprise that you would not be game enough to do that because research commissioned by the Prime Minister’s department made it very clear what the average Australian thinks. Let me just quote a little from that market research. It said: ‘Both working and pension groups generally supported maintaining a strong supportive safety net.’ In other words, it reaffirmed the traditional Australian notion of a fair go and Australia’s support historically for the underpinning of a social security net. The participants in this market research went on to
say: ‘Governments need to help ensure people are not left behind, that we will not ask people to do more than they are capable of, that we will not ask those who are looking after children to work.’ Very importantly for this debate, they believed in more opportunities and no greater obligations for people with disabilities. I repeat: more opportunities and no greater obligations.

So the Australian community at large understands clearly that both industrial and social security safety nets are very important parts of the maintenance of our traditional commitment to welfare provision in this country and that they enable those who at times are left behind to be able to rely on government assistance to ensure a fair go. It is no wonder that the government did not disclose this nasty, mean-spirited agenda because it knew it would be rejected by the Australian community.

I have heard a lot said in this chamber about the McClure report. As you know, the Labor Party embraces many of the positive and constructive suggestions encompassed by Patrick McClure. It is interesting, again to refute this notion that somehow we are running a scare campaign, to listen to what Mr McClure—the chair of the government’s own welfare reform committee—had to say about these mean-spirited and nasty proposals. Speaking on ABC radio on the morning of 16 May, Patrick McClure was unequivocal in his criticism of this budget proposal. He said this:

Where I have concerns is this modification of eligibility criteria, so one of the modifications is that they’re going to reduce the hours worked from 30 to 15. It just doesn’t have the balance and it’s not the spirit of our report which was that there was no aim to disadvantage people who were on a disability support pension.

I repeat: no aim to disadvantage people who are currently on the disability support.

We know, from looking at the detail, that 200,000, on our estimates, will be severely disadvantaged. They include those people coming newly on to the disability support pension and those who will be up for review—and I reiterate—with no guarantees, as your cabinet document makes it clear, of a place in services to help those who are pushed off disability support to find meaningful employment.

The disadvantage of the changes proposed in this bill—so incorrectly named ‘disability reform’—are numerous. Let me quote a few of them. Not only do the people who are going to be moved off or who are not going to get onto disability support face losing up to $52 per fortnight, they will also lose concessions such as the $5.80 pharmaceutical allowance. In some cases they will lose the $68 pensioner education supplement, the pensioner concession card and the telephone allowance. When you add all that, it really does strike at the very foundations of being able to live with a degree of dignity when one is suffering from a major disability.

On top of that, something that—surprise, surprise—the minister did not pick up when she put out the press release selling the virtues of all this great funding that is going to come into her department is the fact that currently many people on the disability support pension are in fact working between 15 and 30 hours a week. They will be incredibly and severely disadvantaged by these proposals. Nine per cent, it is estimated, of the current disability population are out there doing what they all would wish to do—that is, leading productive and meaningful working lives. Many of them are currently at award rates of pay. The minister did not seem to realise that these people were going to be in severe jeopardy.

Just in case you think that this is again just a scare tactic on our part, let me quote from a very authoritative body. I have constituents, like many of you do, with children suffering from Down syndrome. Let me quote what they say:

Many of our members are working part-time, for more than 15 hours a week, and are in receipt of at least part DSP and associated benefits. The proposed changes would have a major negative impact on them and those who are about to embark on training and entry into employment. The proposed changes will discourage people from extending their hours of work to more than 15 hours per week and will significantly reduce the income of those working longer hours who are transferred to the New Start provisions. They will also lose a range of other benefits such as travel concessions, rental assistance and health benefits.
People with Down syndrome have a range of conditions unique to the syndrome. Health benefits are therefore critical to quality of life. Travel benefits assist the mobility of people who will never drive and will always be low income earners. It is unlikely that people with Down syndrome who have an intellectual disability will be able to meet the mutual obligations required by the tests for the Newstart Allowance and may end up receiving no benefits at all ... People with Down syndrome want to work and can work with support ... The current earnings credit scheme allows people on the DSP to work part-time and allows people to improve their circumstances whilst retaining the additional benefits. The proposed provisions ... in this bill that we are so strongly opposing— ... will effectively act as a disincentive to increase pay rates to award levels and discourage people from working more than 15 hours a week. The result will be that people will be increasingly isolated socially and have reduced involvement in the wider community, adversely affecting their health and psychological conditions.

I quote from the Down Syndrome Association again to refute this nonsensical allegation that somehow the shadow minister and members on this side of the chamber are out there whipping up a scare campaign. We do not have to scare anybody, because people know precisely what these regressive measures will mean for those people.

Mr Hardgrave—Your whole speech is misinformation. You are misleading.

Ms GEORGE—I would invite you, Minister, to come to my electorate and speak to the men who have worked all their lives in backbreaking jobs, many of whom are on the disability support pension, who believe that they are perfectly entitled and meet the criteria to have government assistance. You come and tell them why they, in backbreaking work in their late 50s, are not entitled to the benefit of a disability support pension. You touched a raw nerve.

Ms GEORGE—I am sorry, Mr Deputy Speaker; hence the point of order.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Wilkie)—The minister has a relevant point of order, in that the member for Throsby needs to refer her remarks through the chair.

Mr Hardgrave—Mr Deputy Speaker Wilkie, I rise on a point of order. It would probably help the member for Throsby in framing her future speeches to stop reflecting upon you as the chair throughout her speech. She has constantly accused you of your mean spiritedness. I do not really want to see you being accused in such a way, Mr Deputy Speaker; hence the point of order.

As I was saying, the final insult to the disability sector is the gun at the head— the threat that there will be no increase in funds for the new Commonwealth-state disability agreement unless Labor, with a gun at its head, agrees to cut the disability support pension for those who are proposed to be moved off it. I think that is so wicked and so mean. It is not new money. This government knows the huge unmet demand that exists in the community at large for disability services. You know the wonderful job that disability service providers undertake day in and day out, and you know that many of them are already struggling because of your mean spirited refusal to pay for the additional award increases that—
government promised in the year 2000.’ It is not new money, and people out there in the sector understand it is not new. It is not new; it is money that was previously committed, money frittered away by the government in the election, money that the government thinks will now be raised by the cruel cuts to people reliant on the disability support pension.

None of this has anything to do with disability reform. The members on this side of the chamber are very committed to reform of the welfare system. We are committed to a fair society. We are committed to a society that, in benefiting from economic growth, ensures that the benefits of that growth are properly distributed among all our citizens. We will not be supporting cuts to the pension, as our shadow minister has clearly indicated—nor do we believe that it is appropriate for a gun to be held at the head of the disability sector by the threat to refuse the additional funding previously promised.

Ms KING (Ballarat) (12.28 p.m.)—I rise to speak in opposition to the Family and Community Services Legislation Amendment (Disability Reform) Bill 2002. What a disgrace! Here you have a government who once again are caught out saying one thing before the election campaign and saying another thing after. The Prime Minister gave a commitment prior to the election that no person would have their pension cut as a result of social security reforms. When you change the goalposts by redefining what it means to be disabled in terms of the work force, it is a cut. This is a government who would do and say anything to cling on to power and then, at the very first opportunity they have, they betray the disabled and grasp with both hands the opportunity to kick people off the disability support pension.

On budget night the Treasurer failed to show what he has to offer the nation as Prime Minister. Instead, he attacked the aged, the disabled and unwell to pay for the pre-election splurge. Well done, Treasurer! In introducing cuts to the disability support pension, the Treasurer has shown himself for what he really is: a man with no heart. I think in the Wizard of Oz we call that character ‘the cowardly lion’—full of courage when it comes to bullying people on pensions, but too scared to tap his leader on the shoulder and tell him it is time to go.

Be under no illusion, this bill is not about genuine welfare reform—it is about welfare cuts. The government is doing everything it can to move away from real reform. It has ditched the modest recommendations in the McClure report. If the government genuinely wanted to do something about growth in disability support pensions it would look at the drivers of that growth. Why is it necessary to cut people’s pension in order to help them into work? If the government were serious about assisting people on disability support pensions into work, it would seek to remove disincentives for people entering the labour market and it would work actively towards growing jobs in the areas of high unemployment. If the government wanted to assist people on disability support pensions to get a job, then it would help them get a job. It might actually put money into those areas of disability and injury that are preventable. It might think about doing something about the waiting lists for access to specialised training services that exist in my electorate, such as those experienced by Highlands Personnel, who have been told they can get funding growth only for a limited number of places rather than the 72 that are currently on the waiting list. It is a two-year waiting list.

But this government is not interested in genuine welfare reform. You do not have to cut pensions to help people into the work force. What this government is on about is not giving people a helping hand. It is not about enabling people with disabilities to participate. It is simply about cutting the pension. If you want people to participate in work, why not help them? Why not fund rehabilitation services more adequately? Why not invest in people’s skills? This government tries to tell us that the drivers of growth in disability support pension recipients are in people’s heads—it is a psychological problem or they are just downright lazy. If this government were serious about reforms in this area, it would seek detailed research into the types of disabilities and injuries that people who are going on disability support pensions are experiencing. It
would fund prevention programs in the area of injury, an area that I used to be director of in the Department of Health and Ageing.

According to the Department of Family and Community Services a large number of those on disability support pensions over the age of 45 have musculoskeletal impairments commonly acquired by the combined effects of degeneration and prolonged periods of manual labour. Basically, they are worn out from the types of work they have done, in some cases for over 40 years. They have various degrees of disability—but this government is saying that this group are rotters. If this government were genuine about reform in this area, it would look seriously at occupational health and safety as a health issue and not allow the Commonwealth representation on the National Occupational Health and Safety Commission to be dominated by the Department of Workplace Relations. If this government were serious about helping this group, it would put money into injury prevention and road safety.

But what do we see in the budget? Cuts to the disability support pension and not one extra dollar allocated to health promotion and injury prevention. If you look at the health budget overall, in fact only about one per cent of the overall health budget is actually spent on prevention. If the government is seriously concerned about rising numbers of people on disability support pensions in the future, then how about it puts its money where its mouth is and adequately funds prevention programs?

Speakers from the government on this bill have tried to argue that some of the Australians Working Together measures debated in this House yesterday should be considered in relation to this bill. Let us consider them. The bill yesterday sought to introduce an activity test for single parents with kids 13-15; increase breaching provisions; abolish the mature age allowance and introduce some more stringent activity testing for this group; delay the working credit measures for a further 12 months; replace the community support program with a personal support program and include PSP activities within participation agreements; and create the potential that this may result in the government mandating participation that is social rather than economic—hardly measures that will help people thrown off the disability support pension.

This disability bill restricts the eligibility criteria for the disability support pension, and not just for new applicants. New criteria will be applied to everyone who is currently on this pension. Thousands of disability support pensioners will be forced onto the Newstart allowance. For those kicked onto unemployment benefits, payments will be cut by $52 per fortnight and activity testing and the inflexible breaching requirements will be applied.

But the cuts this bill introduces are not just $52 a fortnight. Disability support pensioners will also lose access to important support assistance over and above the $52 a fortnight cut to their payments. For example, people with a range of severe disabilities who are studying at TAFE to make themselves more employable will lose $52 a fortnight and their $68 a fortnight pensioner education supplement, and they will have to reduce their study to meet the activity test requirements to look for five jobs a week. What is more, we heard the government in question time yesterday refusing to guarantee that people will have access to special employment services. In short, they are creating a welfare trap. We heard the Prime Minister unable to guarantee that he was going to keep the disabled pension for people with paraplegia, for people with rheumatoid arthritis or for people with severe disabilities. The Prime Minister would not guarantee that people with severe disabilities would not be pushed onto unemployment benefits.

I oppose these changes because they are completely out of step with any modern thinking on welfare reform. They are out of step with the community’s opinion and the community’s experience, and they are nothing more than a cost-cutting exercise from a heartless government. The government’s actions prove that it does not have a clue about welfare reform. Cutting people’s benefits does not help people move into work. If anything, it hinders their transition. There would not be a member in this House who
has not received calls from constituents concerned about these measures—calls not just from those on disability support pensions but calls from their families, their parents and their community representatives. Estimates are that one in four disability support pension recipients will fail the new tighter criteria as they are progressively reviewed over the next five years.

In my electorate there are over 4,000 people currently in receipt of disability support pensions. Translate the cuts to my electorate and that would see over 1,000 people having their benefits cut by $52 a fortnight. The government is going to reassess people’s capacity to work. They are currently letting a tender for 100,000 such assessments. I would have to say that the tender is pretty limited. It allows only two hours for an examination, an interview to assess a person’s capacity to work, and report write-up. Anyone in the field of disability services will tell you that it can take several assessments and a lot longer than two hours and a quick examination to assess a person’s capacity to work. Quick and dirty assessments will lead to drawn-out challenges and will not help the welfare system one iota.

This government is searching for its next scapegoats. It has had a go at asylum seekers, it has tried its hand at trade union members and now it is scouring about for the next group to blame. We have had the Minister for Employment Services hitting the airwaves on the basis of a totally unscientific survey of 52 people in New South Wales, trying to whip up negative publicity for the unemployed—people who look to him for assistance in getting a job, people he has responsibility for in his portfolio. But the minister would rather denigrate the unemployed than help them. We have punitive measures being introduced for the mature age unemployed, many of whom have become so due to this government’s failure to protect and preserve Australian manufacturing jobs. The government also has its sights set on sole parents. But on the other side of the House the most popular target for government vitriol appears to be the disabled. Then again, perhaps it is not so popular. We see the gaggle of speakers that line up on the other side of this House when there are things that they think will be popular in their electorates, but the list of speakers on this bill is pretty thin. Not too many government members seem to want to associate themselves with this bill.

When the government’s proposals were met with predictable outrage—they even had some market testing done so that they could gauge the reaction—the Prime Minister, the Treasurer and the Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations dug into their bank of spin and resorted to smear and innuendo. Suddenly the character of people with disabilities was questioned. They were malingerers, liars and rorters. If that was not enough to convince you, they were even labelled as being trained as terrorists. The government’s budget has a human cost, and no amount of vilification of people with disabilities will obscure that fact. This measure has been poorly thought out. In response to considerable questioning from this side of the House about the impact of this measure on those on disability support pensions currently working for 15 hours or more on award wages, the government firstly could not tell us what the impact would be and then finally told us, ‘We’re going to try to make sure that they are exempt.’ Where in the bill does it say this? They had not even thought about it until we asked them the question. What sort of policy making is this?

The linking of this bill to the Commonwealth’s funding offer for the Commonwealth-state disability agreement is yet another example of how mean and tricky this government is: do what we say or we will hold you to ransom. The government is threatening to close down some 200 services if this bill is not passed. The government is prepared to hold the disabled and disability services hostage if it does not get its way. This is the first time that funding to the states and territories under the Commonwealth-state disability agreement has been made contingent on this parliament passing government legislation. It is an extraordinary measure and it will be on the government’s head when the money runs out and hundreds of people with disabilities and their families are left without support.
No political party with any principle could countenance this type of thuggery and blackmail. No person with a disability wants his or her continued access to respite, accommodation and support to come at the expense of another person’s pension, but that is the choice being offered by this government. This bill confirms that the government has abandoned positive welfare reform. This bill shows that the Howard government is not interested in positive reform and investing in people, but it is willing to cut their benefits. I oppose this bill.

Mr ANDREN (Calare) (12.41 p.m.)—The government budget of 2002-03 has received a very harsh reception in relation to the avenues it has taken to save money, described from various corners of the electorate as cruel, mean, slugging and bullying; and that is not only from people with a political agenda. The Family and Community Services Legislation Amendment (Disability Reform) Bill 2002 serves to amend the Social Security Act 1991 and the Social Security Administration Act 1999 to allow for the budget’s proposed changes to the qualification criteria for the disability support pension—changes that have been very much the target of the broad based criticism I mentioned.

The government’s stated aim in this and other welfare reform measures has been to rein in the cost of social security in this country by encouraging people back into the work force. This is a very admirable aim when put on paper but in reality, as I said some years ago in my first speech in this place, we now have a situation which does not provide for those people on the left-hand side of the bell curve, the normal distribution curve, of intelligence and indeed therefore access to the educational and employment opportunities that this brave new world offers. Where once we had those with limited intellectual capacity able to go out and work in the jobs that were available in the processing factories, in the mines, on the roads and so on, we have been so clever as to obviate the need for that sort of employment. Those people more and more have been cast into the uncertainty of inability to find jobs. Many of them have been quite cynically, at times of high unemployment, shifted by the process—quite deliberately, I believe—onto the disability support program. They have been hidden, as indeed the system hides the true unemployment figures by determining that those with an hour or two of work a week do not appear on the unemployment figures and therefore do not show up as part of the displaced work force searching fruitlessly for some meaningful occupation.

Once upon a time we used to say that four, five or six per cent unemployment was round about full employment, but today I notice we are parroting the five per cent target from one side of politics: we are there at six per cent and aren’t things getting wonderful? That does not mean that 94 per cent of people have as much work as they want. It meant that once, 20 or 30 years ago: four or five per cent unemployment meant the other 95 per cent had as much work as they wanted. No longer—right around the world—does it mean that. It means we have a massive and growing number of people who are the underemployed and are in fact the unemployable. The people who are most vulnerable are the sorts of people we are talking about in the context of this bill.

The number of people on the disability support pension—and therefore a cost to the disability support pension scheme—has been steadily increasing, according to the government, at a rate of four per cent a year. So, to rein in the cost, people need to be encouraged or boosted—as the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs prefers—back into the work force. Economic and social participation is the name of the game. We are told that removing people from the disability support pension means greater savings that can be directed elsewhere. This bill endeavours to do this mainly through changes to the qualification criteria for the DSP. The work capacity threshold will be reduced from 30 hours a week to 15 hours a week. For those over 55, their qualification test will now apply to the labour market in general and not to the person’s local labour market as was the case previously.

Those who no longer qualify for the DSP will be compelled to apply for alternative income support which will mainly be New-
start allowance. This bill also amends the Newstart work search activity test to further tighten the system. The activity test requires a job seeker—a definition that, with these changes if this bill is passed, will soon include a significant number of extra ex-DSP recipients—to demonstrate that they are actively looking for work and that they must accept all suitable offers. They must attend all interviews, attend approved training courses, which they are not to leave without good reason, provide Centrelink with details of income earned, and enter into a preparing for work agreement if required.

Failure to comply with these requirements will result in breaches being applied against the client, thereby reducing their income support. This bill will enable the activity test and accompanying breach rules to be applied to those who are not able to work for at least eight hours a week or more. This will widen the scope of the breach requirements exposing people with genuine disabilities who have been pushed off disability support by the changes to the qualification criteria. Those who suffer from mental illness or mental disability, and where their illness is episodic or impairing such that they can work more than 15 hours will be at greater risk of being breached for failure to comply with the activity test. I received an email from one of my constituents in Eglinton near Bathurst who suffers from a mental illness and she was concerned that those with invisible disabilities will be adversely affected by these changes and subject to threat of penalties for breaching—the thought of which has already contributed to raising her stress levels.

According to a press release issued in March by the Australian Council of Social Services, the Minister for Family and Community Services recognised that there were serious problems with the breaching system—a system that ACOSs described as hindering more than helping people get into work. This does not sit well with the stated aim of the bill to encourage people on disability support back into work. The Minister for Children and Youth Affairs in his second reading speech said that the changes will focus the disability support pension on a person’s capacity rather than their incapacity through better assessing people’s capacity to participate, but it will expose those moved off it to penalty because of their incapacity.

The government’s trade-off in all of this—its safety net for those who are removed from the disability support pension and its encouragement of these people back into the work force—is 73,000 additional places in disability employment assistance at a cost of $258 million over three years—new money but not new programs. There has been no mention of new innovative programs to meet the needs of those with disabilities which will be needed to cater for those who qualify under the new 15 hours per week criterion. This begs the question: how effective are these programs at getting people back to work?

The latest figures available are from 1998-99 during which time 10,855 DSP recipients have returned to work. These figures were taken from a then DSP population of around 550,000 people, which is now over 600,000—that is less than two per cent. For the current DSP population of 652,000, nine per cent earned income in 2001—an increase from 8.4 per cent in 2000. There has been a 0.7 per cent increase in DSP recipients receiving income, which is not an encouraging measure of the success of the current rate of rehabilitation and training services on offer from the government, especially in the context of the 30 hours per week test. Those same programs will be expanded to accommodate 73,000 more people. By logic, those who will have access to these services under the new 15 hours per week test will be significantly more disabled and with greater rehabilitation and training needs that will undoubtedly require new, more finely-tuned programs than those currently available.

Of the 73,000 new places in rehabilitation and training programs, 17,200 places are to be made available in disability employment services under the third Commonwealth—states and territories disability agreement, the CSTDA. This leads me to one of the more unethical aspects of this bill. In fact, I do not think it is anything short of legislative blackmail. This new CSTDA agreement, offering $2.7 billion to the states and territo-
ries over the next five years, is contingent on the proposed amendments to the disability support pension in these bills being passed. As far as I can find out, this is the first time that funding to the states and territories has hinged on the federal parliament passing legislative reforms. It gives considerable leverage to the government in the whole area of disability reform.

Disability employment services in New South Wales and many in my electorate are facing financial crisis under the current Commonwealth-state funding arrangement that has left them short of meeting the award increases to employees under the new social and community services award passed in November last year. The federal government has consistently refused to increase its funding to meet the increased costs of this award, saying that the annual incremental increases in funding are more than adequate to cover the new award. They are not. In fact, these disability services, once called sheltered workshops, are now out there competing in the marketplace with their products.

In the case of Glenray Industries in Bathurst, it is a wood product that many of you in this House have probably seen in Woolworths supermarkets around the countryside—an excellent piece of work: a breadboard. For instance, it probably takes four or five people, some in a very limited way, to do a bit of sandpapering on the corners, under supervision. These residential care people are given an opportunity to work in the real world, and it takes a couple of people to look after the needs of half a dozen people in their particular group home. It needs an intensive staff to client relationship, both in the workplace and in their domicile situation. It needs an enormous degree of compassion, tolerance, patience and skill. It is a skill that needs a reward that has been recognised in these increases. We as a Commonwealth ask Glenray to provide a service to the Commonwealth. It is a service, and they are paying GST now, competing against the other products out there in the marketplace, including cheap imports that are flooding into the country now through Clints and all the other cheap outlets that are flogging this stuff coming into the country. Glen-ray are not making any money out of the product, but they are making esteem and pride.

Recently, I went to the opening of their new laundry, where they are providing laundry services on a commercial basis for uniform people around the countryside. These kids—some of them 45 years old, whose parents are ageing and need them to be in these places—are in a productive and encouraging environment and are loving what they are doing. But this place is about to hit the wall because it does not get the lousy extra bit of adjustment to pay for the product that we have contracted Glenray to produce on behalf of the Commonwealth. We are arguing the toss over that, and yet we are about to exploit the prejudice out there—and, in some cases, a well placed prejudice—about some people who have slipped onto the disability support pension scheme with a crook back that is very difficult to determine just how crook. Sure, there are bludgers—there are bludgers everywhere around us when we care to look—but we do not premise legislation like this on the few who we believe may be exploiting a process unfairly. We look at what damage we may do to these people by the unprincipled political argument, which is very popular and very easy to swallow in a very simplistic fashion, but we will hurt a lot of people along the way.

CPI increases and wage rises infer the Industrial Relations Commission’s safety net and mean that any indexed annual increase in funding is well and truly absorbed in the case of Glenray and others. To illustrate the point, I relate the experience of Glenray. They employ and train developmentally disabled people, as I have said. The CPI increases for 1999 to 2001 were 1.2 per cent, 2.8 per cent, six per cent—the GST hike—and 2.9 per cent respectively, while their funding indexation for the corresponding years was 0.38 per cent, 1.78 per cent, 2.3 per cent and two per cent. The result is that services like Glenray will have to meet the increased costs, such as the SACS award, from their existing funding. For Glenray, this means being forced to seek out—wait for it—more productive disabled employees. What are they? They are the people Glenray will look
for—school leavers and so on—who are more productive, who are able to turn out the breadboards for Woolworths with a couple of workers and who will be competing against the able bodied out there in the work force.

Is this the sort of disability support system that we are constructing under the marketplace rules? I think it is, and I think it needs a complete rethink, because we are driving our disability support programs into the marketplace to compete. Just think about it. Is this not contradictory and contrary to the provision of disability services—the services on which the government relies for its rehabilitation and training services, which are already under pressure financially? The government has steadfastly refused to meet the new funding requirements, but now offers some new funding, only on the provision that this legislation—which will increase the number of people requiring its programs—is passed.

The Family and Community Services Legislation Amendment (Disability Reform) Bill 2002 needs serious amendment. I do not have the resources at this point to come up with them. The bill is being rushed through this House as usual, and I can only trust that sanity prevails before it returns here with the amendments that it clearly requires. At this point, I am certainly not supporting this legislation.

Mr KATTER (Kennedy) (12.58 p.m.)—I do not wish to canvass all the very excellent arguments put up by the previous speaker, the member for Calare, and a number of other speakers as well. A very comprehensive view of the bill was given by the previous speaker and I think everyone would be well advised to take cognisance of that speech. Having said that, some say we are putting pressure on people to force them into the work force.

Most certainly, I am no bleeding heart, and I get an enormous number of employers coming to me complaining that they cannot get workers. I carry around with me wherever I go an excellent document containing a full rundown on what the real unemployment figures were about six years ago—although it must have been earlier than that because the ALP was in government at the time. The person who produced that document was Dr Kemp, who later became the minister for employment. Dr Kemp says that the real unemployment figures were about double what they were being quoted at. Larry Anthony says that the real number of people who cannot get jobs and who are on benefits may be as high as two million, the three editors of the three biggest national dailies all say that the unemployment figures are twice what it is claimed they are, and the government has admitted in the budget that the real unemployment figures are dramatically higher than they appear.

I do not have the figures with me, and I must apologise to the House for that, so I am travelling by memory here. From memory, over the last seven or eight years there has been an increase in the number of people on disability and similar pensions of 376,000. The current government claims that they have reduced unemployment by around 400,000. So all that has happened is that the reduced unemployment figure represents the 376,000 increase in the number of people on disability and related pensions. I must admit, I am leaning heavily upon the work done by Dr Kemp in this area. I can provide for any member of the House the references for those three landmark articles by the economics editors of the three major dailies in Australia.

If the real unemployment figure is six per cent, then Mr Larry Anthony, the minister, must be a liar, Dr Kemp must be a liar, and the three leading economics commentators from the three major newspapers in Australia are also in error. Dr Quiggan and Dr Langmore, in their excellent book *Work for all*, say that the real unemployment figure for Australia—they were the ones who first led me to look at the disability pensions issue—is not around 10 per cent, but 17 to 19 per cent. It is fully documented in their book. The result of the book was that Dr Langmore lost his seat in parliament. It was an ALP government at the time, and he was an ALP spokesman of some considerable note, so he was sacked from this place. The other result was that Dr Quiggan was the only economist in Australian history ever to receive the Academy of Science prize. He went on to
gain very distinguished acceptance by the Australian community for the wonderful work that he did.

The point I am coming to, which is so relevant to this bill, is that we cannot force the unemployed to take jobs because the jobs simply do not exist. The only time I ever got really badly bashed up in a public debate—with all due respect to you, Mr Deputy Speaker—was against a spokesman for the Waterside Workers Federation. I was arguing that there were a lot of people on the dole who should not be on the dole; they were just being lazy and naughty and they should have some pressure put upon them to go out and do a decent day’s work. He shot me to pieces by saying, ‘Hey listen, they are not bludgers because six years ago they were all working.’ Six years ago then was 1972, and in 1972 there was two per cent unemployment in this country. I make no apologies to anyone for saying the reason for that was the determination of one person, John McEwen. Again and again he said that the major responsibility of government was to provide work for its people. In a very famous letter written by Ted Theodore to John Curtin he wrote:
The major job of government is to provide work, meaningful work, for its people.

So two of the greatest men in Australian political history have used exactly the same expression. The history books record both of them as very great men.

Instead of concentrating on putting stick upon people who are hiding out in the disability rolls, if we provided them with a carrot of encouragement, like a job, we would not have to resort to this sort of legislation. I cannot say that as confidently as I would like because I think that some pressure may have to be applied at this stage. That is not a very pleasant thing to have to say, but it may well be the case.

I present one case. A person in my electorate who has a government type job and responsibility for employing a lot of people has the disability people leaning on him. This is a delivery service; they deliver parcels and that sort of thing. He has a very grave disability which does not enable him to be as mobile as he would like to be. It is enormously inappropriate that this person be forced into this sort of job. It is even more extraordinary that an employer is being pressured to put such persons into this job. In this age of litigation, there would seem to be great exposure on the part of all parties concerned. It is the sort of case that arises when you start to put immense pressure upon people. We then start to run into some ugly scenarios out in the real world. I am worried that this is going to occur here. It is hard to judge this legislation without a more detailed look at how it would work itself out on the ground administratively.

The point that I wish to make to the House is that the real unemployment levels in this country are horrifically high compared with any other period in our history, with the possible exception of the Great Depression of the 1930s and the Depression of the 1890s. Excluding those two periods, the unemployment level is enormously and disgracefully high. The unemployment rate has fallen, and the current government deserves credit for having brought it back, but unemployment is still at a level which is totally unacceptable to the Australian community.

In speeches of this nature, I always make reference in the House to the exceptional work done by the federal department of health. They graphed the rise in suicides amongst young men in this country for 30 years, from 1966 to 1996. Then they graphed the rise in unemployment in the same cohort of the population. It is really eerie: both graphs are almost identical. Clearly, one is the product of the other; one is the cause and the other is the effect. There cannot be a more heartfelt cry from the people of Australia than that of our young men saying, ‘The society you have created for us is so ugly that we are going to leave it completely, in the most definitive of manners.’ There are more people saying that in Australia than in any other country on earth. We, as the people that run Australia, have to ask ourselves what we can do to overcome those things. I deeply regret to say that, if the government is serious about putting very real pressure on a lot of these people—not studious and well thought out pressure but real, across-the-board, insensitive pressure—then there is no
doubt that there will be an increase in suicides and other stress related, ugly occurrences throughout our society today.

I cry out all the time in this place that in my electorate I sit upon a treasure-trove of resources. I say without apology to anyone that the Gulf country and its periphery can support a population of 60 million people. We have six times more water than the Murray-Darling, which supports a population of 20 million people. We have beautiful, rich, black topsoil that runs for 1,200 kilometres, 600 kilometres wide, and our husbandry is so awful as a nation that it is being torn to pieces with natural erosion on one side and introduced species, such as the terrible prickly acacia tree, on the other side. So there is work out there for people; there is, as our national anthem says, 'wealth for toil'. But there is no wealth for toil in Australia: all of our natural resources are being frozen by the government. Under national competition policy, we cannot build a port, we cannot build a bridge, we cannot build a road, we cannot put electricity on for people that have not got electricity—in fact, there is hardly a single thing that has ever been done in this country that can be done today. We are prevented from doing this. So instead of looking at using the stick, I would plead with the government to look at using the carrot.

Debate (on motion by Mr Ross Cameron) adjourned.

APPROPRIATION BILL (No. 1) 2002-03
Second Reading

Debate resumed from 28 May, on motion by Mr Costello:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Ms MACKLIN (Jagajaga) (1.11 p.m.)—
First of all, I move the second reading amendment that has been circulated in my name:

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 condemns the Government for:

(1) its failure to deliver a budget surplus in 2001-02 after a decade of growth;
(2) its failure to deliver a budget surplus in 2002-03 without breaking previous commitments on defence, roads and working credits;
(3) imposing the cost of a pre-election spending spree on families via higher interest rates and cuts in health and welfare spending;
(4) falsely claiming that cuts to health and welfare payments are needed to fund the war against terrorism and border protection;
(5) wasting $5 billion of taxpayers money by gambling in foreign currency markets through cross currency derivatives;
(6) wasting almost $3.5 billion by failing to manage currency risk on defence spending despite warnings from the Auditor-General;
(7) wasting $31 million on maintenance services for 40 years old helicopters that are years overdue despite a $800m downpayment;
(8) its failure to recognise the GST as a Commonwealth tax and this Government as the highest taxing of all time;
(9) its failure to consider the fairer options put forward by the opposition to offset the harsh measures it intends to impose on families, the sick and disabled;
(10) the failure of its Intergenerational Report to recognise that investment in education, research and development is critical to our future prosperity and our capacity to generate the revenue and wealth required to support an ageing population.

Ms MACKLIN—I will continue my remarks from the other night. The government likes to claim that it has increased Commonwealth funding of government schools by 50 per cent since 1996, but its own education department has provided the real story in the 2000 National Report on Schooling in Australia and in the legislation. In real terms—that is, in year 2000 dollars—we are spending now, and will still be spending in 2004, exactly the same amount for each primary and secondary school student in a government school that we were spending in 1993. That was $450 per primary school student in 1993, it is $450 now and the same will be the case in 2004. For secondary school students, it is $664. It was at that level in 1993, it is $664 now and it will be $664 in 2004. This zero increase in real terms clearly demonstrates the Howard government’s indifference to the needs of the 2.2 million
children and young people who rely on our public schools for their education.

This neglect by the Howard government contributes to the outcomes that have been described in headlines we have seen in this week’s Melbourne Age newspaper. On Monday, the front page read ‘VCE scores: how government schools are failing the test’. Tuesday’s headline was ‘Most uni places go to private schools’. These headlines reflect the fact that students from disadvantaged backgrounds—those who need additional resources to meet their particular needs—are overrepresented in our public schools. They get nothing extra in this budget.

The budget papers indicate that funding is not allocated on the basis of need. On average, non-government schools operate with at least 15 per cent more resources than government schools but it is those non-government schools, with resources of up to more than double those in government schools, that have benefited most from the Howard government’s policies. We know of schools charging fees of $15,000 or more that received increases in Commonwealth grants of over 150 per cent. Our Australian egalitarianism—our commitment to a fair go—should question any government policy that puts billions of additional dollars towards non-government schools while effectively giving government schools a zero increase in constant prices, as the minister’s own departmental report shows.

The budget papers show a small increase in Commonwealth funding this year for vocational education and training following five years of the previous minister for education’s attack on the public provider, TAFE. I was alarmed to read this week the research findings by Louise Watson of the University of Canberra, showing that Commonwealth funding of TAFE fell in real terms by almost $150 million or 12.7 per cent between 1997 and 2000. The small increases in this budget for the new ANTA agreement will not offset these cuts. The author of that report concludes with the following statement:

If this trend continues the vocational education and training system will become increasingly incapable of providing the skills needed for a knowledge-based economy.

After a decade of economic growth, there is no relief in this budget for overcrowded classrooms, whether they are in our public schools or in our TAFE sector, or for the crisis that we face in our universities.
We know the universities are struggling with the effects of the $3 billion cut in Commonwealth grants since 1996. At a time when nine out of 38 of the public universities are in deficit, higher education should be a priority in this budget. But there is nothing in this budget that addresses or even acknowledges the fact that the crisis in our higher education sector means that our universities are now failing to meet the needs of many Australians. Almost 54,000 qualified Australians could not get a university place in 2002—and this is according to the Australian Vice-Chancellors Committee. That is a 33 per cent increase in unmet demand since last year. There are 54,000 eligible Australians whose talent, hard work and ambitions have been wasted because of this government’s cuts to higher education. There are 54,000 eligible Australians—those with the marks to get into university—who have been cut off from their future ambitions and their potential because this government does not believe that education is a Commonwealth government responsibility. There are 54,000 Australians whom this government will not help pursue their dreams. As far as I am concerned, it is a shocking waste of Australian talent. What is even worse is that this figure includes tens of thousands of Australians who wanted to study courses where Australia has a severe skill shortage. There are potential nurses, teachers and other health professionals that the government has turned away from their aspirations to study these courses in our universities.

If the budget failed to address the investment that is desperately needed in education to generate the jobs of the future, it has also, as the figures show, failed to address the needs for jobs today. The budget shows that the Howard government has all but given up on reducing unemployment and, seemingly, has given up on the unemployed as well. The budget forecasts that the unemployment rate will only decline from 6.3 per cent today to six per cent by June 2003. We also know that there are many others who are seeking work who do not register in the official unemployment figures. While the government lifted its economic growth forecast for 2001-02 and 2002-03, unemployment projections remain stuck at around six per cent. The Treasurer claims that the economy is going gangbusters—to use his phrase—but the budget papers show that the Treasurer’s economy is only delivering jobless growth.

Given the economic growth experienced in this country over the past decade, employment growth under this government has been dismal. We have also seen in this budget cuts to the Job Network, which are certainly unacceptable at a time of increased pressure on employment services. We know that there is anticipated to be a large number of people—up to 200,000—moved off the disability support pension onto Newstart. A lot of those people will be seeking support from the Job Network, but this budget cuts $64 million from employment assistance under the Job Network over the next four years. So, with over 620,000 Australians unemployed and with 37,000 of our long-term unemployed unable to access intensive assistance, we certainly cannot afford to reduce the amount that we are putting in to helping Australians who are searching for work.

The budget could have provided the government with an opportunity to make serious structural changes to a Job Network system that is failing the unemployed, but once again they ducked that task. Nor have we seen in this budget any attempt to address the problems of the Work for the Dole scheme, which is not delivering positive employment outcomes. Three months after completing Work for the Dole programs, less than 12 per cent of participants are in full-time jobs. This is a budget that did not offer any improvement in jobs and certainly did not offer any increased assistance to those unemployed Australians who are desperately seeking work. This budget has nothing to say to unemployed Australians, such as Robert Oldham from Brisbane, who wrote to me recently. Mr Oldham has been unemployed for the past six years. He has applied for 600 jobs, put himself through a TAFE accounting diploma and is currently trying to finish a Bachelor of Business degree. It certainly is not Robert Oldham who is unqualified or lacks initiative. As he says:

I have written to an employment consultant. I have been informed that there is nothing wrong
with my background, my resume, or my university grade point average. I must conclude that the problem is lack of jobs.

It is typical of this Government to blame the unemployed to take the spotlight away from their failure to create jobs.

Sadly the cuts to employment assistance in this budget and the weak projections for employment growth will only make it harder for people like Mr Oldham to get a job. Labor knows that the strategy has to be investing in education. If we invest in the skills and ingenuity of our people, we can create a better life for all Australians—including looking after the elderly, the disabled and the sick. We will be able to look forward if only we invest in education and skill development, looking to a future that delivers higher productivity, more jobs and better jobs. But, of course, education and training did not get a look-in in this budget. This is the agenda that should have been front and centre of the government’s Intergenerational Report, but it was entirely missing. This budget entirely failed to look to the future and failed to invest in the future. It could have delivered more jobs and better jobs, if only this government had taken the hard decisions to put the money into education and training where it is so desperately needed.

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

Mr Edwards—I second the amendment and reserve my right to speak.

Mr CADMAN (Mitchell) (1.25 p.m.)—I cannot believe that a spokesman for education is so poor on numeracy. I would have thought that one of the prerequisites for the Leader of the Opposition in choosing someone to advance education policy is that they can do their sums. This government has increased higher education funding by 5.8 per cent in this budget. That is not the picture painted by the spokesman for the opposition, the honourable member for Jagajaga. There is a record $6.6 billion going into education, the highest amount the nation has ever invested in education. If we could get down to some real education policy, the House would be better informed.

I want to look at the reforms that the government is introducing because, indeed, this is a government of progress and reform. The government of Australia had a terrible mess to clean up when it was first elected, with huge deficits, high interest rates, high unemployment and high inflation. Those were the things in the economy to which the government first had to apply its mind during its first term of office—fix the economy, get rid of as many problems as possible which had been created by the Labor government, get inflation down, get interest rates down and take charge of the huge deficits which had been run up by the Australian Labor Party. I remind the House that not only had the previous Labor government been able to borrow money all over the world and from Australians but also the previous Labor government put up income tax, and still that was not enough. It sold things like Qantas and just tipped the funds into the bin of money and spent that as well. That caused a colossal problem for Australia and that is what the coalition government was about in the first three years in government.

Then we had to do something about the key reforms that needed to be made which were, first of all, to get more money back to people and get the government out of their pockets. So tax reform was next on the agenda, getting the taxation system right so that Australia had a broad based consumer tax—something which the rest of the world had—and making sure that it was administered simply by business, that revenue would flow to the states, cutting out all rows with state governments, premiers and prime ministers, which historically had been a problem in Australia, and putting in place a clean and efficient tax system. The trouble with that was that the Labor Party wanted to interfere at every step of the way, complaining about it and trying to hold it up to make it impossible to get the changes that were needed. They did not want to do it themselves, but would not let anyone else do it either—a strange way of looking at government. Tax reforms were made and there was more money in people’s pockets, with a great release of funds back to people who needed to have more of their own resources.

In the third term of office, the government is continuing to reform, to get industrial re-
lations changes that will benefit small business, to fix up superannuation and to make changes to business taxation so that we have one of the most effective and efficient business taxation systems in the world, and to do something about border protection, to make sure that our boundaries are held secure and safe. The government promised these things to the electorate during the election campaign.

To back up those reforms and the direction that the budget has taken, the Treasurer produced a report which includes projected changes in the Australian population over the next 40 years and the projected costs. This report gives today’s government and governments of the future a better understanding of the policies that ought to be in place in order to meet some of those goals. How large should our debt be? What should the average growth of the Australian population be? How many recipients of Commonwealth payments are we likely to have in the years ahead? What will be the shift from benefits to the aged compared with benefits to families, for instance? How will the finances of the government change? What will happen to Australia’s population, because we are not replacing ourselves? We need to make sure that the population projections are sound. What should our migration levels be? How many locally produced Aussies will we have compared with how many migrants we will allow to come to our country? What will happen in the workplace? What will happen to the employment rates? What is the projection for revenue and expenditure of governments into the future? All of these questions have been looked at as part of this budget. This budget is the first of a 40-year program which seeks to meet the needs of the Australian people and produce results that will cope with the challenges of the future.

This budget continues the government’s management of its own affairs but, unfortunately, during this year we have had some additional expenses that have impacted on the bottom line. Firstly, the government needed to take steps to prevent people coming into Australia willy-nilly, as they wished, without going through the normal immigration or refugee programs. So the government has had to spend an additional $1.3 billion to rectify those problems and invest in protecting our borders. In addition to that, Australian defence personnel have played a very strong and significant role in Timor and Afghanistan in securing the freedoms that others cherish and that Australians regard as part of their rights.

By the end of this financial year, the government will have a surplus of $2.1 billion and will also have reduced Labor’s debt of over $90 billion by $61 billion. This does not sound so significant to the average person, except that a debt of $90-odd billion was imposing on us repayments of around $10 billion a year, which included interest rate charges. So the reduction of that debt releases more funds for Australians to use. Government borrowing is just the same as everyone else borrowing: you have to put a sum aside all the time to repay it, and that is what has been happening. We are relieving ourselves of that debt, and that means that we are managing our affairs more successfully. The economy will continue to grow; inflation will remain at around 2¾ per cent; unemployment will continue to fall and should be under six per cent by the middle of next year; and business investment will be strong.

This budget includes funding for the defence white paper, which will be $1.3 billion higher than it was last year, bringing total spending on defence to $14.1 billion. The increased funding will support the war against terrorism, it will maintain the integrity of our borders and further improve longer term defence capabilities. That will allow us to continue our international role, to protect our borders, to make sure that we buy the right equipment and to invest in the training of personnel for future needs.

The budget strengthens border protection by funding activities to deter unauthorised boat arrivals. Part of that is making sure that the processing centre at Christmas Island is developed so that people know that they cannot automatically come to Australia but will be processed offshore. I am thankful that there have been no more arrivals over the last seven months, and that is due to the government’s firm stand on these issues. We
have also set aside funds in this budget for securing our own security. Those funds are $1.3 billion over five years to make sure that we ourselves are safe from terrorist attacks. Just as the United States found that it was not safe from unexpected attack, Australia needs to take the right steps to protect the integrity of our internal security systems. There is a capacity there for us to be secure, externally and internally, and to make sure that all arrivals to Australia go through the proper processes.

The budget also follows through and fulfils every election commitment that was made during the campaign. That has been the history of this government, and I guess that is why people trust John Howard: he delivers on what he says he will do. I cannot remember a single Labor budget where that was done—not one. I can remember sitting on the other side of this parliament and making speech after speech on budgets where I could demonstrate, time and again, the failure after failure to deliver on your budgets. Even the estimates were dramatically wrong; you never hit the targets. Mr Deputy Speaker Lindsay, I am not referring to you. You always hit the target. You are particularly popular with your voters, and I know those military men and women who are part of your electorate understand that you are a great target hitter. But, when the Australian Labor Party were in government, their budget estimates were proved to be wrong time and again.

I do not want to be frivolous about this but the fact is that if you say that the glass is running over, it never gets better than this, you have never had it so good, and make statements of that type when things are hard and rough, trying to demonstrate by tough talk that things are okay, that is unpersuasive—people do not like that. I compare that with the role of the current government, who are more likely to say, ‘We know we are doing well, but we are also sure that we can do better, both as a government and as a nation.’ The false expectation is not created, as it was year after year particularly by Paul Keating when he was Prime Minister.

We have delivered on the baby bonus. The new baby bonus of up to $2,500 per year for up to five years will be available to parents with children born on or after 1 July 2001—a great initiative, supplying money to young Aussies, young families, just at the time they need it. That was something that some of us were used to. It was a traditional part of Australian life: an unexpected gift—a baby bonus—when children are born. Governments in the past have cut it out. This government has restored it. I think this is a wonderful initiative.

We have delivered on our commitment to modify and improve superannuation as part of the reform process. In this budget, qualifying low income earners will receive up to $1,000 per annum in superannuation contributions. This is a great approach. We are putting money in, helping people prepare for the future. It is like a start-up scheme you give to your kids, saying, ‘Here is your super; here is your insurance; here is your policy; here are the first 10 years payments—from then on it is yours.’ That is what the government is doing for low income earners to get them into superannuation.

The self-employed will be able to claim tax deductions of up to 100 per cent for superannuation contributions of up to $5,000. If you are self-employed, you might have a block of land, some plant and equipment, a corner shop or maybe a ute and some tools if you are in the building industry. The opportunities to prepare for the future are not quite as broad as for a person who is in employment. This idea is very useful because it will encourage people who are self-employed to continue to invest in superannuation and encourage them to prepare for their retirement in a way that they have not been able to do until now. The maximum superannuation surcharge will fall from 15 to 10.5 per cent by 2004-05. The Labor Party objects to that, but that seems to me the thing that is raised most frequently as one of the most unfair taxes and one of the most difficult to manage. I think we ought to get rid of it. If they are so intent on taking money from high earners, they ought to do it through the tax system, not through superannuation. It is up to the Labor Party to decide on that. No doubt we will hear from them. There are no
ideas coming from them at this point except the wish to object to everything that is done.

We are getting more doctors into outer suburban areas. This follows the government’s program of training more doctors to go to rural and regional Australia. The government will also provide $73 million over four years to build new radiation oncology facilities outside capital cities and fund their operation. These will go into regional and rural Australia. This is a very important initiative. Having travelled widely through rural and regional Australia I have found that the lack of services is something that city people do not understand. Only people in the bush know the disadvantage with which they have to survive. This is a very good initiative.

In aged care there will be an extra $654 million over the next four years to provide better care for older Australians. That is a program of partly helping people in their own home and partly upgrading regional and rural nursing homes and training nurses for aged care services. There is a very thoughtful, compassionate attitude to older Australians in this budget. There are more benefits for veterans too: an extra $93 million over four years to extend veterans’ access to the gold card for health care; $85 million over four years for better compensation for war widows; $318 million provided for funds for better roads. It is a very balanced and thoughtful budget.

There are some harsher things in the budget but I think that, on balance, they are warranted. The change to the national health program seems on examination to mean a slight rise in the cost of pharmaceuticals, but the government will continue to subsidise every pharmaceutical that anybody wants on the national health scheme that costs over $28.60. Anything over $28.60 that is prescribed and on the national health scheme will not cost more than $28.60. Anything costing less than $28.60 will not change in price. For example, a Ventolin pack at $17.90 will stay at $17.90. They are $17.90 today, they will be $17.90 after this legislation goes through—it will not change. Despite the scaremongering of the Australian Labor Party, this is not a harsh measure. For pensioners, their minimum will rise from $3.20 to $4.20. Anything costing under $4.20 will stay the same price; anything costing over $4.20 will be subsidised and will not cost the pensioner more than $4.20. The additional charge, whether it is $50 or $100 per prescription—and many of them can be higher than that—will be subsidised by the government. All in all, this is a very interesting and supportive budget. I like to see governments delivering on their promises. This is what the government has done while at the same time protecting our borders and maintaining a sound and secure economy with growth and opportunities for employment.

Mr McMULLAN (Fraser) (1.45 p.m.)—It was encouraging to hear the remarks of the previous speaker for the government, the member for Mitchell. It always encourages us to see that the government is living in the past. It highlights what is wrong with this government and this budget—nothing to say about the future. The Appropriation Bill (No. 1) 2002-2003 provides funds for a budget that has totally demolished the Treasurer’s claims of fiscal fortitude. There is now overwhelming evidence that the government’s claims of sound budget management are a hollow sham.

There are five reasons for this growing awareness. First, the claims of fiscal prudence are not supported by actions. Second, the claims to have reduced debt are based on an utterly simplistic approach that is increasingly recognised by commentators as having a flimsy economic foundation, which is based on misleading accounting practices that would make the auditors of Enron and HIH blush. Third, the much-vaunted Intergenerational Report missed a valuable opportunity to chart the challenges facing economic management over the coming 40 years. Fourth, the budget said nothing about the single most important driver of better living standards and economic performance in the future—that is, improving our productivity performance through investment in education and innovation, research and development. And, fifth, the government has done its best to disguise its fiscal failures by abandoning its own attempts to improve accountability through the use of accrual ac-
counting and substantially reducing the amount of useful information in the budget papers.

Let me deal first with the government’s claims of sound budget management. Consider these comments by the Prime Minister to the Australian Council of Social Service’s conference in Melbourne on 25 October last year. Of course, that was during the election campaign. When asked by a questioner if he would allow the budget to go into deficit—this was on 25 October last year; this financial year in which we are in deficit—the Prime Minister said:

I have made that commitment, I will repeat it to you this morning, I do not believe that we should go into deficit, and we won’t go into deficit if we are re-elected.

That promise lasted a very long time; it lasted until the first set of figures came out. He went on to say:

Once you start with deficits they get bigger and bigger ... you end up with high interest rates, higher unemployment.

By its own benchmark, the government’s budget has failed miserably. For the current financial year 2001-02—the financial year in which the Prime Minister made that commitment—the budget is estimated to be in deficit to the tune of $1.2 billion by the old cash measure and $3 billion by the government’s previously preferred accruals measure. The accruals measure is that which the Treasurer said three years ago was world’s best practice. Now he seems to be suffering from a severe case of selective amnesia, for he all but ignores the accruals measure, which demonstrates the uncomfortable truth of his budgetary incompetence.

The real reason for this year’s deficit was the government’s desperate pre-election spending spree. There are many points that could be made about the real significance of it but, in the time available, let me emphasise one which flows from the Prime Minister’s remarks which I quoted previously: budget policy was so lax in 2001 that it has increased upward pressure on interest rates and will continue to do so.

In the period shortly after the budget was brought down and particularly shortly after the Leader of the Opposition’s response was delivered—to which Rehame reports there was more response than to the budget itself, which disappeared without a trace very quickly—we had a short argument about costings. The Treasurer tried to attack the validity of our savings measures for our alternative superannuation changes with a press release making utterly spurious costings of our proposals and, as reported by some of the senior journalists in the gallery in analysing it, the Treasurer emerged with egg on his face. Today the Treasurer’s embarrassment should be even greater, because an estimates committee has shown that there was one calculation that better data should be reassessed in our costing. One of our savings measures actually delivers $40 million more savings than we claimed and therefore the savings—far from being overstated, as the Treasurer tried to claim—were in fact understated by $40 million. Our figures are more robust than we claimed. That is probably why we are not hearing any more about that particular issue. The Treasurer has not returned to that argument since retreating in defeat shortly after the Leader of the Opposition’s response: ‘I enjoyed hearing him described as having egg on his face, but I am not sure he did.’

The budget’s first failing then was its failure to live up to proper standards of prudent management by going into deficit. Its second failing was this continuing trumped-up claim at superiority on the basis of having reduced debt. If the debt reduction had actually reduced the call on national savings, it would indeed have taken pressure off interest rates and contributed to our economic health. But there are two ways of reducing debt: one is to reduce your spending; the other is to sell assets. That does give you more cash, but it does not make you any less a spendthrift. At a national level, it does not make any difference to the overall level of spending and saving in the economy; it simply substitutes private debt for government debt.

As the opposition has been arguing for years, and as Ross Gittins demonstrated in the Sydney Morning Herald last Monday, the debt reduction of the Howard-Costello years is based almost entirely on asset sales; that is, it has been achieved not by reducing the
level of spending but by selling the family silver. There is a long and complicated argument about that, but the Australian public know. Quite simply, they can see what is happening every day and they know it continues to happen.

Let me turn briefly to the Intergenerational Report, which represents a sadly missed opportunity. This is the aspect of the budget that was supposed to be new and exciting. It has been cast as the centerpiece of the budget and I think also, not very subtly, as a launching pad for the Treasurer’s claims for the prime ministership, supposedly showing for the first time the impact of demographic change on the government’s finances over a 40-year time horizon. But, sadly, it misses the mark.

Let me first say that I welcome the principle of an Intergenerational Report, or IGR, as it has been called. The idea of looking forward and attempting to anticipate future budgetary pressures under a variety of scenarios is worthwhile. Indeed, the introduction of compulsory superannuation by the previous Labor government was founded on just this principle of meeting Australia’s future financial needs. It is sadly ironic that one of the first acts of the Treasurer, who now claims to be preaching the virtues of intergenerational fiscal responsibility, was to ditch the increase in superannuation contributions which would have taken superannuation contributions to 15 per cent and which had been budgeted for prior to 1996. Putting the evident double standards that this exhibits to one side, you always have to exercise a degree of caution when attempting to predict the future. If we had perfect foresight, life would be very simple, but the IGR contains projections based on prevailing conditions and is underpinned by certain assumptions. As we all know, the future can take many unpredictable turns. The choice of assumptions that underpin such projections can have a major influence on the final outcome. This point is borne out within the report itself in its so-called sensitivity analysis. It shows that adjusting the assumptions can have a substantial impact on outcomes. I fear that the Treasurer has manipulated the assumptions that have been used to support his own purposes.

Let me make a few points that highlight the failings of the Treasurer’s version of the IGR. The information in the IGR is not new. There are no startling revelations. It is instead little more than a repeat of existing studies at a slightly more disaggregated level. It is amazing that the Treasurer can pretend that this is even a revelation to him as the first time the report was presented in this form to him was by the National Commission of Audit in 1996. Unfortunately, the IGR is flawed as a planning tool because it takes a very narrow perspective. It fails adequately to address issues like the environmental issues over the next 40 years, regional issues, population policy issues or infrastructure related issues. I am sure most Australians would agree that these issues are critically important in considering issues of intergenerational equity.

The Intergenerational Report paints a very bleak outlook for Australia, with a slowing in the growth of living standards and higher budget deficits, yet it does not offer any solutions. The predictable response has been to take the low road and cut living standards now to pay for costs that the government is trying to make us afraid might arise in the future. However, there are clearly other options open. Indeed, the answer is hinted at in the IGR itself, but the government has chosen to ignore it. The IGR notes that if productivity growth were higher, this would substantially alter the projections.

Let me give an example. If productivity growth was sustained at around the levels experienced in the 1990s, it would mean both higher GDP growth and consequently less pressure on the budget. The IGR makes it clear that the warnings of an $87 billion revenue shortfall are highly sensitive to the underlying economic assumptions. With a relatively modest productivity improvement of 0.25 percentage points on average over the next 40 years, economic output would be over $150 billion greater in today’s dollars.

A key element of an alternative Labor approach to the challenges presented by demographic change lies in pursuing a high productivity growth agenda driven by sustained
investment in educational training and research and development. It is about taking the high road to higher living standards that will increase Australia’s capacity to fund essential services such as health and aged care. Australia’s destiny is in our hands. It is up to us to shape our future and determine where we want to be in 40 years rather than passively accepting one bleak scenario as the pre-ordained outcome which must be feared and resisted.

This question of improving productivity is one of the really dividing issues between the approach of the government and the opposition at the moment. The budget’s medium-term goal should be to create a more productive Australia. We see the path to that substantially through investment in education and research and development to build the skills that will boost future economic growth and jobs. Yet the government’s Intergenerational Report predicts that the key driver of future productivity growth will decline to its mediocre long-term trend by the middle of this decade. And if we do nothing, that might be right. The comprehensive reforms undertaken over the eighties and nineties by the Hawke and Keating governments have fundamentally transformed Australia’s economy into a more competitive and productive economy—a point acknowledged by the Treasury in last year’s budget papers. But where are the measures in this budget that will generate the new productivity surge?

I want to take these last few minutes to turn my attention to the issue of budget transparency. Having comprehensively vandalised the budget, the Treasurer is now seeking to cover up his failings through various ‘smirk and mirrors’ tricks in the budget papers. Let me turn firstly to the Treasurer’s new-found disdain for the more accurate measure of the budget bottom line, the underlying fiscal or accruals balance. Is this really the same Treasurer who lectured us in 1999 at the National Press Club when he said:

Having put in place accrual accounting, I don’t think any government in the future could ever go back to the tricks of the eighties and nineties.

It turns out you were wrong, Treasurer. The tricks are back after all. Why else would you seek to conceal that the budget is actually in deficit to the tune of $3 billion? Not in surplus, as you brazenly claimed in your recent electorate newsletter, but in deficit to the tune of $3 billion? And why else would you conceal that the surplus for next year is only $180 million?

The new-found dedication to the underlying cash measure does not actually translate through the whole of the budget papers; it applies only to the first few pages, which is all the Treasurer hopes anybody will read—‘Just read the first few pages; don’t look into the fine print.’ It is still impossible to fully follow through all the budget papers in the cash manner, since everything else is presented on an accrual basis. If the Treasurer really wants to continue to equivocate on which measure he wants us to use, he should at least do us the courtesy of presenting full accounts in both measures. The most damning indictment of the Treasurer’s budget papers has been delivered by the government’s own watchdog on financial transparency, the Australian National Audit Office. The ANAO provided a qualified audit of the Commonwealth financial statements last year on the basis of the failure to treat taxation revenue on an accrual basis and, of course, because it did not treat the GST as a Commonwealth tax. Should there be something in the report urging the government to comply with the relevant accounting standards? Isn’t that exactly why Enron and HIH went to the wall?

Treasurer, what the Australian people want to know is: when are you going to take due credit for the fact that, thanks to the GST, you are the highest taxing Treasurer since Federation? Why don’t you just take the accolade? While you are fixing your budget papers, Treasurer, you might also wish to address the farcical situation that has arisen with regard to the outcomes and output framework for budget reporting that was
brought in at the same time as accrual accounting. There is merit in the principle underlying the move to outputs and outcomes reporting. We support focusing on ends rather than on means in public sector reporting—that is, focusing on the results and consequences for the community that the government seeks to achieve. However, in practice, the move to an outputs and outcomes framework has resulted in a dramatic reduction in the budget information available for parliamentarians and the Australian public. Most seriously, all too often outcomes tend to be vague statements that have little practical meaning, particularly relating to outputs. For example, the Department of Defence reports on one overall outcome: the defence of Australia and its national interests. Treasury’s overall outcome is strong, sustainable economic growth and the improved well-being of Australians. It is difficult to see how public accountability can in any way be served by attempting to report against such extremely general outcomes.

This high level of aggregation means that it has become extremely difficult to get any useful information out of the portfolio budget statements. The funding of many agencies and functions that were previously identified separately has now been absorbed into higher-level aggregate figures, which makes it impossible to track expenditures over time. What is more, very little information is now provided about spending under special or standing appropriations, even though it comprises about three-quarters of total spending. Those appropriations are particularly important because they are not scrutinised annually by the parliament as a matter of course, unlike annual appropriations.

I would like to use this opportunity to outline an initiative that a Labor Treasurer will take to improve the quality of these statements. They should be reviewed annually by the Public Service Commission to assess their adequacy against public sector reporting standards. If portfolio budget statements for any agency or department are assessed as falling short of those standards, the agency or department should be required to reprint and re-present them without additional appropriation; that is, from their original allocation, at their own agency expense. I believe this would provide an important discipline for departments and agencies to improve their reporting on their use of taxpayers’ money, for which they are ultimately accountable to this parliament. All in all, you can only conclude that this is a budget of sadly missed opportunities. It is a failed job application by the Treasurer for the Prime Minister’s job. Unfortunately, poor and sick Australians will pay the price.

I support the amendment moved by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition. It outlines, beyond the economic and fiscal areas on which I have had the opportunity to speak, some of the shortcomings of this budget as a document about choices. All budgets are about choices that governments make about the directions in which they want to take us. We see them somewhat more starkly on this occasion because of the Intergenerational Report, which allows us to show the consequences of choices that are and are not being made and the long-term consequences of budget measures. Against the short-term standard, the fiscal standard, or the long-term standard of measurement of choices about the future of our country, it is a budget of missed opportunities and a budget of failure.

Mr BAIRD (Cook) (2.05 p.m.)—It is my pleasure to speak on the Appropriation Bill (No. 1) 2002-03, which was brought down by the Treasurer. Against any measure, it continues the government’s very strong economic performance. One of the fantasies of the Labor Party, as they constantly tell us, is that the Tampa made all the difference—they were riding high. I have to tell them that the constant advice that I have from people in my electorate is that the government’s economic performance was the key criterion for their support of the government. When I was out doorknocking in my electorate, as I did on most days of the election campaign, people told me that they would support the government and that they remembered when interest rates were as high as 17 per cent under Labor—one of the key factors that stayed strongly in people’s minds during the election. More than anything else, that issue was raised with me during the election. This
budget continues the government’s strong performance in all key economic indicator areas. It indicates the strong performance of the Prime Minister, the Treasurer, the Minister for Finance and Administration and the Expenditure Review Committee in putting the budget together. It brings together various elements to provide the engine for growth. It also provides cutbacks where there is a need to do so for the long-term benefit of the country. It also shows compassion for the aged, for increased funding in education and in providing incentives in the export area, in tourism and especially in health. In particular, it delivers many of the key promises made by the government at the last election.

It is certainly a budget that foresees jobs, growth and an underlying cash surplus of $2.1 billion. We all remember the many days under Labor when total debt climbed to $85 billion—an extraordinary figure. It was like there was no tomorrow; you put it on your credit card and away you go. This government is consistently paying back that debt. It was interesting to hear the shadow Treasurer in his long reply, all totally read from the pages provided to him by his researcher no doubt, because he was talking about selling off assets as if it was like selling the family silver.

The shadow Treasurer’s hypocrisy was amazing as he was a minister in the government that made the decision to sell off Qantas, Australian Airlines and the Commonwealth Bank. Not only did they not use that money to pay off debt, as is known, they used it to assist their bottom line and, despite that, they still managed to rack up a debt of $85 billion. To hear the shadow Treasurer come out with these amazingly hypocritical lines was astonishing. It would be understandable for him to say, ‘Well, yes, we agree with privatisation.’ Finally the wheel has turned. Even the old Eastern bloc agrees with privatisation. As the Romanian Ambassador said to me at a function just two nights ago, ‘One of the interesting things about Romania these days is that we have a stronger privatisation program than you do in Australia.’ The Labor Party in Australia is still living back in the fifties and in the glories of the old socialist past. That is why they continue the rhetoric. If they said, ‘Yes, we agree with privatisation although we might disagree with what instrumentalties should be privatised,’ there might be some credibility, but instead there is this wide sweep, ‘No, we shouldn’t sell off the family silver.’

It is also particularly interesting that Australia is able to continue this strong economic performance when the rest of the world is experiencing recession or very limited economic growth. Australia stands out on that basis. I heard the shadow Treasurer saying this has been done by mirrors and tricks. It has been done as a result of the hard analysis carried out by international experts who compare one economy against another. It is clear that Australia is amongst the strongest growing economies in the world.

What are the key economic indicators? Since Peter Costello became Treasurer in 1996, growth has averaged 3.8 per cent. The economic growth in the year to December 2001, the latest figure, was 4.1 per cent. That is 10 times higher than the average growth in other OECD countries. Growth is expected to remain strong at 3.75 per cent during this financial year and this is twice that of the UK, the next leading country. As a comparison, that shows how strongly the Australian economy is performing.

Since 1996, unemployment has averaged 6.3 per cent. That is down from a peak of 10.9 per cent, and 8.2 per cent when the coalition came to office. Again, those are very significant changes. Some 971,800 new jobs have been created and the forecast is that, by the time we get to the end of this year, one million jobs will have been created. That is an astonishing performance. It means real jobs for people, and for many young people across the country. That is amongst the most worthwhile things you can do for young people. There are obviously many other aspects we need to attend to, but providing them with jobs is a key aspect. Labour force participation is at near record levels at 64 per cent of the working age population.

Since the coalition came to government, inflation has averaged 2.3 per cent while the average under the ALP was 5.2 per cent. We have more than halved the inflation rate that existed under the previous government. The
average interest rate is 6.05 per cent, which
is the lowest rate in 30 years. Under the ALP
regime, it rose as high as 17 per cent.

As I mentioned before, $60 billion of gov-
ernment debt has been repaid. That is im-
portant because it means that interest pay-
mants have been almost halved since 1996,
from $8.4 billion per annum to $4.4 billion.
That means a significant amount can be di-
verted to other key areas of expenditure. It is
not as if we are just playing with book en-
tries by an accountant; these are real figures
and real money to put into those areas that
need it most and, of course, this is what good
economic management is about.

Other positives include the Economist
magazine forecasting in mid-March that
Australia will have the strongest growth rate
of any of the major industrialised countries
this year. The most recent measures of small
business confidence as measured by the
ACCI and the Yellow Pages small business
survey show that this area is growing
strongly. The Westpac Melbourne Institute
index of consumer sentiment did not move
after the recent interest rate rise, which
shows the level of community confidence in
the government. An ANZ survey showed
that newspaper job adverts were up by 23.6
per cent in April.

I want now to consider what the budget
means for my electorate. First, it is very sig-
nificant in terms of what it provides for older
Australians. Cook’s senior citizens will bene-
fit from the extra $654 million of funds put
in nationally to provide extra community age
care packages. One of the key features of
that is that it will allow older people to stay
in their homes longer. Older people prefer to
stay in their own homes and this measure
provides financial support so that they can
stay in their own homes instead of moving
into a retirement village or nursing home. It
provides funds to allow for care to occur at
home in a less intensive manner than they
would have received in a nursing home.

My electorate gives a snapshot of what is
going to happen across the board. Those
aged over 65 account for 20 per cent of my
electorate. The national average is 12 per
cent, and it is forecast that by 2020 we will
have a national average close to what I have
in my electorate of Cook. This is why the
Treasurer emphasised the intergenerational
aspect of the Treasury report in bringing
down the budget and the importance of fo-
cusing on these figures and what they mean,
and putting more funds into assisting people
to stay at home shows where increasing em-
phasis must be put. I am also pleased that
Cook has won 55 of the new community
aged care places.

Cook has a very vibrant small business
community. One thing that has set our local
small businesses apart is that they have had
particular success in exporting their prod-
ucts. This probably relates to their proximity
to the airport, but small businesses in Cook
received over half a million dollars worth of
export market development grants. Compa-

nies like Manta Surfing products in Cronulla
have taken advantage of the scheme and are
being granted this EMDG program support.
Companies like these stand to further benefit
from the provision of a new TradeStart office
in Sutherland; the government’s announced
intention to double the number of exporting
companies in Australia by 2006, which is
significant and of course assists our economy
on a broader basis; the reduction of the
minimum expenditure threshold to qualify
for the Export Market Development Grants
Scheme to $15,000 from $20,000; and the
minimum grant has been increased from
$2,500 to $5,000.

The third aspect that is important for my
electorate is job creation. I note from the
budget papers that the government will have
created one million jobs since it came to of-
fice. I did touch on this before. Of course,
that figure of one million has been antici-
pated for some time, but we are actually go-
ing to see it as a reality. While it is always
interesting to see the way in which the oppo-
sition wants to put spins on figures, these are
the aspects on which you can measure the
performance of this government. I am sure
the young people in the electorate of the
member for Reid would value these job
creation opportunities.

People in Cook also welcome the in-
creased funds to create 8,500 extra places in
the Work for the Dole program—opposed by
key members opposite as being irrelevant
and not appropriate and endorsed strongly by the electorate, particularly by the electorate of Cook.

Mr Entsch—And mine.

Mr BAIRD—And also in Leichhardt. I am very pleased to see the outstanding member for Leichhardt. He knows how well it is approved and supported. The member for Aston would also agree that this is a strong initiative by the government. If the members opposite actually take the time out to go down and talk to some of the young people who are involved in the Work for the Dole program, they will learn that in general this is well received by the young people. They are learning new skills. Rather than not being able to participate, they are provided with worthwhile skills, and of course they are occupied in doing something meaningful for the funds they receive. For their own dignity and self-esteem that is important.

Almost 500 Work for the Dole places have been won in Cook since the initiative started. I am pleased to say that in my electorate the unemployment rate continues to go down and that we have an unemployment rate which is less than three per cent. Apart from the local member, these are the reasons people so strongly support the government. They look at these figures and they see that this is a strong performance. When their families are involved and they see that so few of our young people and our older people are unemployed, this is an appropriate way of judging the government.

The fourth area that I believe is important is assistance for families. This is a government that puts a strong emphasis on families and keeping families together and on the importance of this for Australia’s future. That is why there is more funding by way of the baby bonus, which was promised during the election campaign. I think we are all aware that it puts a strain on the finances of families when a new child comes into their households. This is an important first step in providing the types of assistance that families will be able to expect. This is also important, as we look at the ageing of the population, to encourage young couples to have families. My research shows that around 1,000 families in my electorate could qualify for the baby bonus in its first year. Young families in my electorate have done particularly well recently through the first home owners grant and savings from low interest rates of around $350 per month on each $100,000 of a mortgage since the high of 17 per cent interest rates under Labor. The baby bonus is an additional plus.

Of course, there are other changes, and I hear the comments made by those opposite regarding PBS changes. The ageing of the population and the way in which the costs of this scheme have escalated indicate that something had to be done. The expenditure on the PBS increased from $1.23 billion in 1991-92 to $4.83 billion in 2001-02. Over the last two years, growth has been around 20 per cent and 26 per cent per annum. Clearly, members opposite understand that. I see the member for Werriwa sitting in the chamber, and I think that most members would understand that what he said before was appropriate, in terms of the need for changes to be made. Certainly he had the support of his former Prime Minister, Mr Keating. It was interesting to read an article on 18 May quoting Paul Keating, when Treasurer, as saying:

Mr Speaker, the Minister for Community Services and Health is announcing tonight—this is on budget night—the most far-reaching restructuring of the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme since it was introduced.

Since 1948 this scheme has enabled all Australians to get the pharmaceutical drugs they need at an affordable price.

But today, scientific advances have resulted a massive increase in the number and variety of health care drugs available.

Mr Keating went on to announce that, were he not to act then, the cost of the PBS would double in three years. That is what is happening in this budget. Those opposite should have a constructive approach and say, ‘We understand why you are doing it; we all wish it were otherwise but, in order to curb the growth, these changes need to be made.’ Today we face the cost of the PBS continuing to grow by around 14 per cent per annum. Its costs have quadrupled since 1991. It is the fastest growing component of Common-
wealth expenditure in 40 years. If we did a projection on current growth rates, it would be around $60 billion.

The increase in cost is small for pensioners. They will have an increase of $1 per script—from $2.50 to $3.50, up to a maximum of $52 in any one year, and then it is free. The cost of a standard prescription for those who are not pensioners will rise from $22.60 to $28.60. This is consistent with what was said by the opposition when they were in government and with the changes that we need if we are to curb the very strong growth in this area. There has been a ballooning of the number of new drugs on the PBS, such as Celebrex to treat arthritis. Celecoxib, the actual name of the drug, costs $142 million for the government and has a total cost of $167 million. The cost levels are amazing and that is why they have to be reduced.

The same could be said about the disability payment. The cost was $2.1 billion in 1991 and it is $6.9 billion in 2002-03. We are growing faster in this area than any other country in the OECD. These changes need to be made if we are to continue to have any strength in the economy. You cannot have it both ways: you cannot have continued strong economic growth and the international community seeing us as being strong and responsible economic managers without curbs in expenditure where the rise in expenditure is clearly excessive. I believe it is an excellent budget for the future of Australia. It sets down some long-term goals, and it addresses some of the key areas where we are going to see strong economic growth in this country, such as interest rates, inflation and employment creation.

Mr LATHAM (Werriwa) (2.25 p.m.)—This is a disappointing budget. It is a budget of broken promises. Prior to the last election, and also in 1996, the Treasurer basically promised the Australian people three things in terms of economic management. The first was surplus budgets, the second was lower taxes, particularly a reduction in the top marginal tax rate in Australia, and the third was to increase national savings. These three promises have each been broken and discarded in this budget. National savings have not been repaired. In fact, the Treasurer has gone out of his way to run down the quality of Australia’s superannuation scheme. Taxes have not come down. This budget confirms the Treasurer as the highest taxing and highest spending Treasurer in the history of the nation. And, of course, we have not got a surplus budget for this financial year, and it is unlikely that we will have one for the next financial year. Three promises—all discarded, all broken in this budget.

A few years ago, the Treasurer was forecasting a $14 billion surplus for this financial year. He has managed to turn that $14 billion surplus into a deficit of $1.3 billion. There is no doubt that this is placing upward pressure on interest rates. The Treasurer himself will not be paying the price for a return of deficit budgeting; the home buyers and the small businesses of Australia unhappily will.

It is hard to understand how the Treasurer can now rationalise his constant lectures to the House about the need for surplus budgeting and the problems you get with rising interest rates out of deficit budgeting with what he has now delivered—a $1.3 billion deficit for this financial year. How can the Treasurer possibly rationalise this inconsistency? After his longstanding lectures over the last six years about the need for surplus budgets, the reality is that a few weeks ago in this place he delivered a $1.3 billion deficit for this financial year. How does the Treasurer get away with it? How does he try to overcome the politics of a blatant broken promise?

I was looking through the history books, and I am afraid he might have taken some lessons from Franklin Roosevelt. Campaigning for re-election in 1936, Roosevelt had to prepare a speech to deliver in Pittsburgh. Four years earlier he had spoke there, advocating drastic government economy and spending cuts. Now he wanted to defend government spending. Does that sound familiar? He asked his adviser Sam Rosenman to figure out some way of making this about-face without appearing too inconsistent. Rosenman thought it over for a few days and finally told him, ‘I think, Mr President, I have found a way.’ ‘What is it, Sam?’ asked
Roosevelt eagerly. ‘Deny that you ever made a speech in Pittsburgh in 1932.’ It is that state of denial that the Treasurer has now gone into. He is denying the facts. He is denying that there is a deficit budget of $1.3 billion for this financial year. He is not denying that he was in Pittsburgh in 1932, but he is denying the true state of the books in this budget.

We see it, of course, in the very popular ‘Higgins News’, the official newsletter of Peter Costello MP, federal member for Higgins. It says: ‘Budget 2002: underlying cash surplus of $2.1 billion; six consecutive surpluses’. It is just blatantly untrue. The Treasurer has administrative responsibility for the ACCC. Now that he is in the chamber, what he needs to do is to refer this document—his advertising—to Professor Fels of the ACCC and seek an investigation for false and misleading advertising. We have not had six consecutive surpluses under this Treasurer. For this financial year, we have a budget deficit of $1.3 billion. This was the Treasurer who gave a guarantee. At his press conference in October last year he said, ‘We are giving a guarantee that we will keep the budget in surplus. Yes, we are.’ He has even gone as far as trying to turn that promise into the pretence of reality in the ‘Higgins News’, pretending that there have been six consecutive surpluses. If he refers matters on to Professor Fels of the ACCC, he needs to himself in the same cart. He needs to seek an investigation into the false and misleading advertising implicit in the ‘Higgins News’.

With question time approaching at 2.30 p.m., Mr Speaker, it might be appropriate for me to seek leave to continue my remarks later, unless the government would like to hear about more budget broken promises and more policy failures by the Treasurer.

The SPEAKER—Order! I too have an eye on the clock. As it is now 2.30 p.m., the debate is interrupted in accordance with the resolution agreed to on 29 May 2002. The debate may be resumed at a later hour and the member for Werriwa will have leave to continue speaking when the debate is resumed.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE
Goods and Services Tax: Local Government

Mr CREAN (2.30 p.m.)—Mr Speaker, I seek your indulgence to express on behalf of the opposition our great sadness at the news today of the serious illness suffered by Sandy Bodecker, the husband of Cathy Freeman. All Australians were looking forward to seeing Cathy run again in the Manchester games but, as she said just a short time ago, families always come first. Our thoughts and support go out to Cathy and Sandy at this time.

My question is to the Minister for Regional Services, Territories and Local Government. Minister, can you confirm that you said a few hours ago that the government may divert some GST revenue from states to local government? Minister, have you discussed this with the Treasurer? Have you discussed it with the states? Doesn’t this mean that you are tearing up the intergovernmental agreement with the states?

Mr TUCKEY—I definitely did not make that remark, notwithstanding the efforts of one interviewer to imply that I had done so. Every time that that question was asked of me I made the point that any reference I made to the various revenues available to the state governments would only be considered in the light of any future recommendations of a standing committee of this parliament, of which Labor have some frontbench members.

Mr Crean interjecting—

Mr TUCKEY—That is exactly what I said: those agreements would not be anything for me to consider. In fact, I made it very clear that that was not the case. You can laugh and giggle—you were not there; I was and there were other witnesses. While we are on this issue, isn’t it amazing that I have been pointing out the inefficiencies of local policing, local health services and local education and what gets published in the Sydney Morning Herald about that great speech made by the Leader of the Opposition and his plea to the Labor Party in New South Wales, when he was taken downstairs for a little lesson in obedience? What did he do?
The SPEAKER—The minister will—

Mr TUCKEY—No, Mr Speaker, this is seriously relevant, because in his speech he talked about exactly these issues.

Mr Swan—Mr Speaker—

The SPEAKER—The minister will resume his seat.

Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER—Members on my left, including the member for Werriwa, are denying the Member of Opposition Business the call. The Manager of Opposition Business does not yet have the call, but I will grant it to him in just a moment when the House extends to him the usual courtesies.

Mr Swan—Mr Speaker, my point of order relates to relevance. This was a question about the distribution of GST revenue—

The SPEAKER—The Manager of Opposition Business will resume his seat. The Manager of Opposition Business is well aware that I had already drawn the minister’s attention to the matter and he indicated that he was in fact about to link his remarks to the question.

Mr TUCKEY—In announcing the government’s policy to have an inquiry into the cost-shifting between state and local government, I personally requested one of the higher-ranking standing committees of this parliament to look into the matter. As I have already said, that committee includes senior members of the Labor Party frontbench. I made it very clear at that interview that that was the basis of the answer, and any future reference only required that recommendations regarding the expenditure be expenditure neutral. That is what has been said, and I made it very clear—as one would think the Leader of the Opposition would be aware—that the process of a standing committee involves evidence. That is legion when it comes to kids being able to buy drugs on Cabramatta railway station, which might be stopped in that regard. The other fact of life is—

Opposition members interjecting—

Mr TUCKEY—We’ve just had the lily gilded.

The SPEAKER—Minister!

Mrs Irwin—Mr Speaker, I rise on a point of order relating to standing order 145. This has nothing to do with the drug problem in Cabramatta. The minister has—

The SPEAKER—The member for Fowler will resume her seat. The minister has indicated where his remarks are relevant to the question. Has the minister concluded his answer?

Mr TUCKEY—Not completely, but almost. This inquiry has been endorsed by the economics committee. It will proceed and the government will take note of the recommendations in due course.

Ms King interjecting—

The SPEAKER—Member for Ballarat!

Mr TUCKEY—It is interesting to note that the Leader of the Opposition has already said publicly that he wants to do the same thing by way of a partnership—it is in black and white. The fact of life is that this is a good idea for this parliament—

Ms King interjecting—

Mr TUCKEY—The member for Ballarat giggles. Ring up your own local authorities and ask them whether they want help of this nature. Of course they do. The people of Ballarat are fed up with having to hire their own doctors—

Ms King interjecting—

The SPEAKER—The member for Ballarat is warned!

Mr TUCKEY—The people of Ballarat do not get an adequate local policing service, and their newly elected member thinks it is a joke. We do not, and if the Leader of the Opposition—old laughing Simon—

The SPEAKER—Minister!

Mr TUCKEY—believes that that is all he is good for, I am very sorry for him and his future.

Foreign Affairs: Thailand

Mr HAWKER (2.37 p.m.)—My question is to the Prime Minister. Would he inform the House of the outcome of his talks with the Prime Minister of Thailand today?

Mr HOWARD—I would be very happy to do that, but before I do I would like to associate the government with the sentiments
expressed by the Leader of the Opposition at the commencement of question time regarding the news of the serious illness of Sandy Bodecker, Cathy Freeman’s husband. Anybody who faces that challenge deserves the understanding and sympathy of the parliament, and I know that all Australians will feel for Cathy and the rest of her family at this time.

Today’s meeting between myself and the Prime Minister of Thailand and senior ministers from both governments and also the gathering in the Great Hall emphasised the strength of a very important bilateral relationship that Australia has. The people of Thailand and the people of Australia have quite a long history, and there are many important and interesting aspects of that relationship. Out of today’s meeting came a number of quite specific and tangible agreements. We have agreed to negotiate a closer economic relations, or CER, agreement. I have described that as being an FTA-plus agreement on which we have decided to negotiate. As an earnest of the determination of the governments to get on with the job, I can inform the House that tomorrow in Mexico, at the margins of an APEC trade ministers meeting, the Australian trade minister, Mark Vaile, and his Thai counterpart will commence the negotiations. So the announcement is made today and tomorrow the negotiations by the two trade ministers from Australia and Thailand will start in earnest.

This is, as I have said, an FTA-plus. Therefore, progress in some areas, such as visas and mutual recognition, could well be made in coming months as the agreement will be comprehensive in scope. Key tariff liberalisation issues will be considered as a package. As in all FTA negotiations, it is realistic to expect that negotiations will move more quickly in some areas than in others.

In addition to the arrangements regarding a closer economic relationship, we have agreed in principle to negotiate a bilateral memorandum of understanding on counterterrorism. We have also agreed to investigate whether we cannot act jointly to provide crop substitution programs in Burma to suppress narcotics, and this is a goal that I know members on both sides of the House will share. There are details—and there are difficulties—in relation to ensuring that the goal is fully achieved and the resources are properly applied but, if those conditions can be met, there is no reason why we should not be involved—if that can make a contribution towards the suppression of narcotics coming out of Burma. Bearing in mind that something like 80 per cent of heroin and other drugs that come into this country come out of that part of the world, Australia, more than most nations, has a vital and ongoing human interest in ensuring that progress is made in this area.

We also agreed, importantly, to explore whether it was possible to establish a working holiday visa understanding between Australia and Thailand. Once again, safeguards will be required on both sides and proper conditions established, but this would in particular give a very significant spur to exchanges between our two communities amongst young people. I think if that agreement can be consummated it will add to the strength of the bilateral relationship.

Australia recently passed the United States to become the principal destination of Thai students going overseas for their education, and that is another example of the importance and the growing strength of the relationship. I want to say, on behalf of the government and I know on behalf of the opposition on this occasion, the Prime Minister of Thailand is a very welcome visitor to our country. It is an important relationship, and I think as a result of today’s visit the relationship is better and stronger and we have laid out a road map to build in a number of very practical and very important areas.

Insurance: Medical Indemnity

Mr STEPHEN SMITH (2.42 p.m.)—My question is to the Minister for Ageing representing the Minister for Health and Ageing. I refer the minister to his advice to the House yesterday that the government had the UMP medical indemnity crisis ‘in hand’. Is your definition of a crisis ‘in hand’ an announcement by the member for Herbert on ABC radio Townsville first thing this morning that the government will extend its 30 June medical indemnity guarantee by three months,
which the Prime Minister—mid-morning—
says he does not know the basis of? Minister,
with about 8,000 Queensland doctors need-
ing certainty no later than Saturday, will you
now end this ongoing confusion caused by
the government’s inept handling of this cri-
sis, restore confidence to doctors and guar-
antee the continuity of medical services?

Mr HOWARD—The honourable gentle-
man professes a concern about reassuring
doctors. Let me say on that point that, given
the steps that have been taken by the gov-
ernment thus far, there is no reason for doc-
tors to stop practising as a result of what has
happened to UMP-AML. I will be having, on
behalf of the government, more to say on this
issue in the next day or so and, as has been
the case with past statements, what will be
said will be constructive; it will be to the
benefit of the community as well as to the
benefit of the doctors. This is a difficult is-
sue. It is not an issue that has been generated
by governments.

Mr Crean interjecting—

The SPEAKER—The Leader of the Op-
opposition! The Prime Minister has the call.

Mr HOWARD—It is an issue that re-
quires the cooperative response of both state
and federal governments, and it is receiving
that. I believe that what has been done so far
has been fair and balanced. I believe what
will be said in the future will be equally fair
and balanced and will provide proper reas-
surance to doctors. It may not meet all of
their expectations, but you can never meet all
of the expectations of everybody on some-
thing like this. We have obligations to the
community. We have obligations to the medi-
cal profession. I have said before that
one of the things that is needed—

Ms Macklin—And to the patients.

Mr HOWARD—The community em-
braces all patients. That was a dramatic in-
terjection. The reality is that this is an issue
which is in part a product of the litigation
disease which is rampant in the Australian
community. Just as public liability insurance
is in great difficulty because of the litigation
disease, the same applies in relation to medi-
cal indemnity insurance. We cannot have it
both ways. We cannot expect to have doctors
available in every part of the Australian
community providing all of the specialties on
demand—virtually—but then complain if
there are some restrictions put on the right of
people to sue. Something has to give. You
simply cannot have a situation in this country
where both of those aspirations are met.
What we have to do as a community is to
work it out.

I want obstetricians in every rural area of
Australia where it is reasonable for the Aus-
tralians living in those areas to have them.
They can only be there if they can afford to
pay the premiums and they cannot afford to
pay the premiums if we continue to be af-
flicted by the litigation disease. What is hap-
pening at the moment is that an attempt is
being made by this government, in partner-
ship with the medical profession and with the
state governments, to work out a solution.

Mr Stephen Smith interjecting—

Mr HOWARD—Instead of the sort of
nitpicking I have just heard from the member
for Perth, he ought to make a few sensible
and constructive suggestions.

Economy: Performance

Mr NEVILLE (2.46 p.m.)—My question
is addressed to the Treasurer. Would the
Treasurer advise the House of the results of
the retail trade and capital expenditure sur-
veys released today by the Australian Bureau
of Statistics? What do these surveys indicate
about the strength of the Australian econ-
omy?

Mr COSTELLO—I thank the honour-
able member for Hinkler for his question. I
can inform the House that the capital expen-
diture, or CAPEX, survey which came out
today showed that new capital expenditure
fell 3.2 per cent in the March quarter. How-
ever, that was after an exceptionally strong
December quarter rise of 7.2 per cent, and
over the course of the 12 months to the end
of the March quarter capital expenditure has
risen by a solid four per cent.

Also with that survey is the expectation
survey for the forthcoming financial year,
2002-03. The second estimate for capital
expenditure in the forthcoming financial year
is 16.2 per cent higher than the equivalent
estimate in the current financial year of
2001-02, which shows that business have very high expectations indeed as to what their capital expenditure will be in the forthcoming year. The budget forecast a 12 per cent increase in business investment in the forthcoming financial year and that is consistent with the expectations that we saw for capital expenditure.

The member for Hinkler would be familiar with some of the very large projects now commencing in relation to investment: Co-malco up at Gladstone, which I know you are very interested in; the magnesium corporation near Rockhampton; the Western Sydney Orbital; the Scoresby Freeway; the Alice Springs to Darwin rail line; and in Western Australia the fourth train of LNG at the North West Shelf. This is a very strong investment climate.

The retail trade figures also came out today and they showed that retail trade increased by 0.9 per cent in April and increased by 7.5 per cent through the year to April. These are very buoyant retail trade figures. What they reflect is a great deal of consumer confidence. The fastest growing area in relation to retail trade was household goods, which have grown by 15.1 per cent over the year, no doubt fuelled by the housing cycle. As that comes off a bit you would expect that to come back a bit. But consumer spending has been underpinned by high confidence, low interest rates, tax cuts and solid employment growth.

Australia is forecast by the Economist to be the fastest growing of the industrialised countries in both this year and in next year. Consumer confidence is very high, as is business confidence. The Australian public, I believe, will welcome the strong business investment figures and intentions and indeed the strong consumer sentiment reflected in today's retail trade figures.

Ministerial Staff: Appointments

Mr Rudd (2.50 p.m.)—My question is addressed to the Prime Minister. Prime Minister, will you rule out appointing Mr Max Moore-Wilton as ambassador to Washington or ambassador to anywhere else?

Government members interjecting—

The Speaker—The Prime Minister is being denied the call by members behind him.

Mr Howard—I cannot imagine that we could do better than the current ambassador we have in Washington. He is a remarkably good representative of the Australian people. Can I additionally add that I have every confidence in the abilities of Mr Moore-Wilton.

Illegal Immigration: People-Smuggling

Mr Baldwin (2.51 p.m.)—My question is to the Minister for Foreign Affairs.

Dr Martin interjecting—

The Speaker—The member for Melbourne and the member for Cunningham! The member for Paterson will start his question again so that I can discover who he is directing it to.

Mr Baldwin—My question is addressed to the Minister for Foreign Affairs. Would the minister inform the House of his meeting today with Justice Bhagwati, personal envoy of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, on Australia's approach to people-smuggling? Is the minister aware of any alternative views to this government's policies?

Mr Downer—First, I take the opportunity to thank the member for Paterson—who is an outstanding member—for his question, and to particularly acknowledge the very strong and vocal opposition that he takes to illegal immigration. He has been stalwart in standing up for Australia's border protection.

In answer to the honourable member's question, this morning I had a useful discussion with Justice Bhagwati, who is the personal envoy of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. When I was in Geneva some months ago, the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mary Robinson, asked if she could send a representative to Australia to look at the detention centre at Woomera. The government agreed that Justice Bhagwati could come, and he is indeed here at the moment. I took the opportunity of having a very civil and constructive conversation with Justice Bhagwati,
underlining that Australia made no apologies for the stance it has adopted to stop people smugglers profiting from sending people illegally to Australia. I also told Justice Bhagwati that this is a policy that is working and we have no intention of changing our policy.

It was a good opportunity for the two of us to exchange a wide range of views. I took the opportunity of telling the judge that there were around 700 unauthorised boat arrivals currently in detention on the mainland in Australia and that, of these, 352 have had their claims rejected and have exhausted all legal avenues of appeal and are awaiting removal. I also told him that another 220 have had their claims rejected and are awaiting judicial review. I think this perspective is not always put strongly enough by those who are critics of the government.

Ms Gillard interjecting—

Mr Downer—Mr Speaker, it is amusing how you always get interjections on this issue from the deeply divided opposition; it is deeply divided on this issue. I told the judge that only 53 applicants are awaiting a primary decision and that the delay in finalising their claims is often due to a lack of documentation and character and security clearances.

In an overall sense, I think it is important that the United Nations and its institutions work closely with an advanced liberal democracy like Australia—the world’s sixth oldest continuously operating democracy—and it is important that the United Nations examine the facts very carefully when they look into issues like this, rather than just listen to the howling of the political critics of the government or people who are pushing a particular political barrow.

That is a point I made to Justice Bhagwati: that it is very important to understand the perspective of people who are criticising the government within Australia and rushing off to talk and write letters to Mary Robinson in an endeavour to criticise the Australian government. Indeed, amongst those more prominent critics of the government on the issue of detaining illegal migrants are Labor Party candidates, Labor Party members and the New South Wales division of the Australian Labor Party. A Labor Party candidate at the last election, who I believe lives in my own electorate in South Australia, Jeremy Moore, is one of the prominent critics of the government’s policy on this issue.

The honourable member for Paterson asked whether there are any alternative policies. Of course, this is the whole point: on this side of the House we have one clear, strong and principled position on this issue, and on the other side of the House they are deeply divided. A Leader of the Opposition who claimed a few weeks ago that he had heard no-one arguing against mandatory detention then ends up having the whole of the New South Wales division of the Labor Party come out and oppose it. It will be interesting to see what happens this weekend at the Queensland conference. On a very important issue for this country, it is the case that the Australian Labor Party is deeply divided. It has no policy—

Mrs Crosio—Rubbish!

Mr Downer—It is not rubbish. It says that one day it will come up with a policy—but when will that day be? If it is such an important issue, why does the Labor Party have no official policy? The answer is perfectly clear: because it is deeply divided.

Employment: Policies

Ms Grierson (2.57 p.m.)—My question is to the Minister for Employment Services. Minister, are you aware that, in April 2002, the unemployment rate for Newcastle was 9.8 per cent, up from 9.3 per cent the previous month? What is your government doing to help people like my constituent, Mr Reg Wadwell—who is happy to be named—who has applied for 175 jobs since becoming unemployed in July 2000 and who, despite being on the so-called intensive assistance program, has not been given access to a single training course?

The Speaker—The member for Newcastle will come to her question.

Ms Grierson—Minister, given that the budget cut $64 million from the Job Network and given the budget’s failure to include any measures to reduce the rising unemployment rate in Newcastle—
The SPEAKER—The member for Newcastle will come to her question.

Ms GRIERSON—isn’t your government making it even harder for people like Mr Wadwell to get a job?

Mr Ross Cameron—Mr Speaker—

The SPEAKER—Before I call the minister or recognise the member for Parramatta, I would point out to the member for Newcastle, as a new member, that her constituent can be overjoyed to be named in the question, but that does not make it in order. Naming someone in a question is allowed only when the name is necessary to authenticate that claim or to clarify the question.

Opposition members—It was.

The SPEAKER—In this instance, neither was necessary and it would take little imagination to frame a question without using the constituent’s name. I call the member for Parramatta.

Mr Ross Cameron—Mr Speaker, I rise on a point of order. In addition to the issue of naming—

Mr Sawford interjecting—

The SPEAKER—The member for Port Adelaide!

Mr Leo McLeay interjecting—

The SPEAKER—The member for Watson!

Mr Sercombe interjecting—

The SPEAKER—The member for Maribyrnong is warned! The member for Parramatta.

Mr Ross Cameron—Page 527 of House of Representatives Practice states: Questions cannot be debated, nor can they contain arguments, comments or opinions. They may not become lengthy speeches or statements and they may not in themselves suggest an answer. In short, questions should not be used as vehicles for the discussion of issues.

I suggest to you that the entire question—

Mr Leo McLeay interjecting—

The SPEAKER—The member for Watson is warned!

Mr Ross Cameron—Mr Speaker, as you are aware, the standing orders prevent the use of questions for the canvassing and debate of issues. The question offends that provision.

The SPEAKER—As every member of the House is aware, this is a problem for every occupier of the chair. It is fair to say that a large number of questions fall outside the parameters of standing order 144, an experience some of us witnessed earlier this week. The chair exercises a great deal of tolerance in this area and similar tolerance in answers. Sadly, that level of accommodation is rarely reciprocated by the House. I have allowed the question to stand but indicated what was inappropriate about it. I call the minister.

Mr Tanner—Mr Speaker, I rise on a point of order. During the question asked by the member for Newcastle, there was a wall of noise coming from the government benches. We could not hear the question and you made no attempt to protect the member for Newcastle.

The SPEAKER—The member for Melbourne will resume his seat. I am in a better position than anyone else in this chamber to measure walls of noise. The minister has the call.

Mr BROUGH—Clearly, I was able to hear the question. I was sitting a little further away than you are. Can I congratulate this constituent on the fact that he is actually applying for jobs. Isn’t it great that in Newcastle there are 75 jobs that he can apply for? Under the Labor Party and under your leader when he was the employment minister, there would not have been 75 opportunities. There would not have been a range of opportunities provided by the Job Network. I wonder how it would have been handled when Simon Crean, the Leader of the Opposition, was the employment minister? Would this gentleman have had the chance of applying or would he have been thrown on the waste heap, in the wastepaper basket, of disability support pension? I have here a graph of those people that entered disability support pension under the stewardship of the then employment minister, now the Leader of the Opposition. These people, under the
last three years of Labor, had an increase of 22.8 per cent in disability support pensions.

Mr Beazley—Mr Speaker, I take a point of order on relevance. The question related to existing programs and dealt specifically with the situation of a particular individual in Newcastle. It cannot remotely permit a minister to stand up here and talk about the disability support pension five, six, seven years ago.

The SPEAKER—The member for Brand’s point of order is not unlike the member for Parramatta’s. The minister will come to the question.

Mr BROUGH—I can understand the sensitivity of a range of former employment ministers who failed the Australian people when there were over one million Australians unemployed. I simply draw to the attention of the House the opportunities that are there now under an improved Job Network, compared to an old CES that failed people, and also the failure of this person here who was then the employment minister who threw people onto the disability support pension at twice the rate that they are currently finding themselves disabled. Either they were sick of the Labor Party, they were sick of you, or they were just not given any opportunities.

The SPEAKER—The minister will come to question.

Mr Fitzgibbon interjecting—

The SPEAKER—The member for Hunter is warned!

Mr Swan—Mr Speaker, I rise on a point of order under standing order 145. I thought the minister was responsible for the Job Network—apparently not. Could you bring him back to the Job Network—

Mr Latham interjecting—

The SPEAKER—The member for Werriwa will resume his seat! The House will come to order! I call the minister.

Mr BROUGH—In conclusion, I just want to reassure the gentleman referred to that the Job Network is there to help, that not only is it helping Australians but we are also getting more people into work than the failed system that preceded it. I understand there is a dilemma in the opposition at the moment because we have those who refer to these people as ‘scum’, and we have got others that talk about us vilifying them.

The SPEAKER—Minister, you have the opportunity to respond to the question and will do so.

Mr BROUGH—Can I assure those opposite that this government continues to be committed and will always remain committed to Australia’s unemployed. Today unemployment is at 6.3 per cent—not 11 per cent—and going down.

Mr Leo McLeay—Mr Speaker, on a point of order: for the last few days you have said you want to raise the decorum of the House, which is a good idea. If that is what you want to do, why do you allow a minister to say that about another member without asking him to withdraw it?

The SPEAKER—The member for Watson will resume his seat. If the member for Watson had had half an ear on proceedings, he would have noted that I immediately interrupted the minister.

Mr Leo McLeay—Why don’t you get him to withdraw the remark?

The SPEAKER—I was relying on the rulings of previous Speakers.

Mr Beazley—Mr Speaker, I require a withdrawal. He directed a remark to all members of the opposition and said that we described people who are unemployed as ‘scum’. I have never heard a single member of the Labor Party or this opposition ever use such an expression, and I am entitled to a withdrawal now.

Mr Secker interjecting—

The SPEAKER—Member for Barker! The member for Brand is aware that action was taken by the Speaker on the remark made by the minister and that it is not normal for withdrawals to be made when remarks are made in a general term rather than a specific individual term. Furthermore, as recently as yesterday, one member of the opposition—I think the member for Batman, but I do not want to misrepresent him—made reference to the fact that the quote used by the minister was in error—
Mr Swan—That is right; I did.

The SPEAKER—The member for Lilley, and I accept that that was in error because I accept what people say at face value.

Mr Leo McLeay—Mr Speaker, on the point of order, you said a few moments ago that you are relying upon rulings of former Speakers—

Mr Secker interjecting—

The SPEAKER—The member for Barker is warned!

Mr Leo McLeay—You said that you were relying upon rulings of former Speakers in making a statement about the minister’s remarks. The member for Brand has said that he would like the minister to withdraw or to indicate why you think the member for Brand’s request for a withdrawal has no standing.

The SPEAKER—I have dealt with the matter comprehensively.

Workplace Relations: Registered Organisations

Mr CAUSLEY (3.09 p.m.)—My question is addressed to the Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations. Would the minister provide statistical information to the House on the membership and financial strength of registered organisations under the Workplace Relations Act? For the purposes of their dealings with government, are these organisations representative of Australian workers and do they have influence on the development of alternative policies?

Mr ABBOTT—I thank the member for Page for his question. I note that the member for Page is a former member of the Australian Workers Union in the days when unions better represented real working Australians. As Neville Wran put it in his legendary Town Hall mugging of the Leader of the Opposition last weekend: This party is a creation of the trade unions. ... They are untouchable. ... No trade unions, no Labor Party.

That is what he said. The Siamese twin relationship between the ACTU and the ALP is really quite simple: the unions fund the party, the unions man the party and the unions run the party. For instance, the Miscellaneous Workers Union has given $3,073,000 to the Labor Party over the past six years and, according to the Register of Members’ Interests, caucus representatives of the Miscellaneous Workers Union included the member for Lyons, the member for Batman, the member for Reid, the member for Bendigo, the member for Scullin, the member for Capricornia, the member for Fraser, the member for Bass and the member for Hasluck—and that is just in one house of this parliament. In the Senate, the Miscellaneous Workers Union is represented by Senator Bolkus, Senator Faulkner, Senator Gibbs, Senator Chris Evans and Senator O’Brien.

Mr Mossfield—Mr Speaker, I raise a point of order. I am not too sure whether the question is in order, but I certainly think the answer is out of order under standing order 145. I put the point that it stands to reason that, if it is out of order to ask questions relating to a minister’s own party, its conferences et cetera and those of other parties, including opposition parties, then surely it is out of order to refer to these items in answers.

The SPEAKER—I remind the member for Greenway that, much as I may like that to be a standing order, the simple reality is that the standing order for questions—

Mr Bevis—What about relevance?

The SPEAKER—Is the member for Brisbane seeking to be elevated to the chair? I point out to the member for Greenway that there is a standing order for questions which is quite explicit and requires the questions not to contain argument. House of Representatives Practice indicates that questions should not refer to what are party matters, but the only requirement for answers is that the answer be relevant to the question. I noted the question, and the answer is relevant.
Mr ABBOTT—I think that point of order from the distinguished former president of the New South Wales Labor Council, and a very long-time union official, rather proves my point. I am sure the ‘missos’ are a fine old union, but it is hard to see why 131,000 miscellaneous workers deserve to have 14 members of parliament. It is hard to see why the Miscellaneous Workers Union should have almost as many members of parliament as the sovereign state of Tasmania. There may well be more. More than 40 caucus members have neglected to declare their affiliation on the Register of Members’ Interests, even though party rules say that every single member must be a member of a union. The last time 60 per cent of the Australian work force were union members was in 1953. The last time 50 per cent of the Australian work force were union members was in 1976. So in moving from 60-40 to 50-50, the Leader of the Opposition is making the great leap forward to 1976. As well as deepening his voice, I expect the Leader of the Opposition is going to swan in here wearing flares, wide ties, sideburns and humming Hotel California. I do not know who is going to mug the Leader of the Opposition this week on his way up to Brisbane but, if the Leader of the Opposition wanted to prove that he had any leadership capacity at all, he would go up to big Bill Ludwig this weekend, he would grab him by the scruff of the neck and he would say, ‘Bill, you and the boys are dinosaurs, and you can’t treat the Labor Party—

The SPEAKER—Minister!

Mr ABBOTT—going to swan in here wearing flares, wide ties, sideburns and humming Hotel California. I do not know who is going to mug the Leader of the Opposition this week on his way up to Brisbane but, if the Leader of the Opposition wanted to prove that he had any leadership capacity at all, he would go up to big Bill Ludwig this weekend, he would grab him by the scruff of the neck and he would say, ‘Bill, you and the boys are dinosaurs, and you can’t treat the Labor Party—

The SPEAKER—The minister will come back to the question.

Mr ABBOTT—like your Jurassic Park playpen any more.’

Employment: Job Network

Mr COX (3.16 p.m.)—My question is to the Minister for Employment Services. I draw the minister’s attention to the Productivity Commission report into Job Network which identified serious problems with the contract incentive structure. Minister, are these flaws the reason why Sale of the Century type promotions are being used by Job Network providers, such as the Mission Employment job ready rewards program that offers employers 10 exciting choices of rewards for placing an applicant, including a flat screen TV, valued at $699; a DVD player, valued at $659 and a set of golf clubs, worth $690?

The SPEAKER—The member for Kingston will come to his question.

Mr COX—Minister, wouldn’t this money be better spent providing training and support to disadvantaged job seekers? Minister, will you guarantee that the new job seeker account will not be raided to pay for this type of promotion?

Mr BROUGH—It is good to see the opposition finally starting to show some interest in employment services.

Mr Crean—What services?

The SPEAKER—Leader of the Opposition, the minister has the call.

Mr BROUGH—What is quite clear by Mission Australia—and I take it you have no issue with organisations with the reputation of Mission Australia—

The SPEAKER—I would remind the minister that I certainly do not have any issue with any of those groups.

Mr BROUGH—My apologies, Mr Speaker. I take it the opposition has no issue with organisations such as those of the quality of Mission Australia and Centrecare providing incentives to employers. After all, if I am not mistaken, the great champions of wage subsidies, and financial inducements to wage subsidies, which cost $184,000 per net outcome under your stewardship, hardly compares to a set of golf clubs, if that is what it takes to get someone a job.

Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER—Member for Swan! Member for Bruce! Member for Leichhardt!

Mr BROUGH—The point I would like to make is that everything that Mission Australia is currently undertaking is for one purpose and one purpose only—that is, to ensure that there are more job opportunities for Australians. If those opposite have an argument with that—the fact that we are now producing more outcomes through the Job
Network than the CES ever dreamed of, at less than a third of the cost; that we have taken into account many of the things that have been put into the Productivity Commission’s interim report; that there are some organisations out there offering targeted job subsidies; that we refuse to see money thrown away in the wanton manner in which taxpayers’ money was abused when your leader was then the employment minister—we make no excuse for a system which actually targets assistance at those who need it, creates opportunities and creates real jobs for Australians.

Mr Cox—I seek leave to table a copy of the pamphlet.

Leave not granted.

Rural and Regional Australia: Sustainable Regions Program

Mr FARMER (3.21 p.m.)—My question is addressed to the Minister for Regional Services, Territories and Local Government.

Mr Tanner interjecting—

The SPEAKER—The member for Melbourne is warned!

Mr FARMER—I refer the minister to the answer the Deputy Prime Minister gave the House yesterday regarding the regional services program. Will the minister provide more details about the regional services program especially in regard to the Campbelltown-Camden area?

Mr TUCKEY—I thank the member for Macarthur for his question. I congratulate him on his efforts since his election in ensuring that ample funding—

Mr Zahra interjecting—

The SPEAKER—I warn the member for McMillan!

Mr TUCKEY—particularly under the Howard government’s sustainable regions program was available to his electorate. This particular program is targeted not only at remote areas but those on the periphery of large cities, such as the electorate of Macarthur where, in fact, there is considerable need for government assistance of a proactive nature.

In yesterday’s adjournment debate, recorded on page 2483 of Hansard, the member for Werriwa raised this grant and referred to the Campbelltown-Camden Sustainable Region Advisory Committee as ‘another useless talkfest and bureaucratic report into unemployment in Campbelltown’. I am sure the three members of that particular advisory committee, including the Labor Mayor of Camden, Mr Geoff Corrigan, would be very grateful for his view of their commitment.

Furthermore, notwithstanding his association with the member for Werriwa, we note that he indicates in the Macarthur Chronicle—which the member for Werriwa also reads, because he referred to it—that he will put his hat in the ring for state Labor preselection. One can only expect that he is either in the wrong union or otherwise the member for Werriwa does not understand the workings of these advisory committees. As their name suggests, they are advisory to the government on how this funding of $12 million for a depressed region may be expended. But what is more, their efforts are not funded from that $12 million—only two accept remuneration. Their efforts are funded independently and separately by department budgets, so the full $12 million will be going. Furthermore, instead of coming in and maligning people who give voluntarily of their time to assist others in their region—

Mr Latham—They’re a pair of Liberal Party donors.

Mr TUCKEY—had the member for Werriwa bothered to go to the web site, in reference to his injudicious remarks, it is quoted there that the local advisory committees will help develop a forward plan for the Campbelltown-Camden region and identify development priorities.

Mr Latham—A talkfest.

Mr TUCKEY—It will administer funding applications for projects that meet locally identified priorities. These might include: minor infrastructure, skills building, encouraging and assisting small business and addressing social development and environmental issues. If that is a talkfest, I do not know what is. That looks like hard work and it was supported the other day by between 100 and 150 people attending at the Campbelltown RSL for the purpose of advising
this committee on what they, the people of the district, thought might be useful.

Mr Latham interjecting—

The SPEAKER—The member for Werriwa is warned!

Mr TUCKEY—But there are other things that the member for Werriwa might acquaint himself with, because further in his speech he suggested that some of this money might go to the Brooks Road connection with the M5. I am a Western Australian—I do not know too much about the geography of New South Wales—but I think the bloke who lived next door to a road should know it is not the M5, it is the F5. The M5, in fact, is a road between Liverpool and Sydney. The local member can chuck mud at local people doing a good job when he does not even know the name of his local roads. Further and finally, as this committee brings its recommendations forward, they should be aware, in terms of the Brooks Road entry to the F5—which the member promotes—that this government has a similar view, that that would be an excellent point of connection to the F5.

The New South Wales government does not think that and I am wondering whether the Leader of the Opposition was also told to tell the member for Werriwa to show proper obedience and stick with what the state Labor government wants, which is twofold: they want the connection in a place the member for Werriwa does not want and they think we should pay for all of it. Further, my constituent has asked me to ask your government what it is doing to help people like him—a job seeker who has been unable to find permanent work for more than two years and now cannot afford to finish his final subjects in his IT TAFE diploma. Wouldn’t a $690 golf club promotional gift be better spent helping Mr Saavedra pay to finish his IT training? When will your government stop ‘cruising’ and start providing decent assistance and job opportunities for the unemployed?

Mr BROUGH—Maybe a little trip down memory lane, when it comes to unemployment, would refresh your memory of your failing of the Australian people. Today, unemployment is at 6.3 per cent across the country; it was 8.2 per cent when this government came to power.

Mr Adams—Answer the question!

The SPEAKER—The member for Lyons is warned!

Mr BROUGH—In March of 1996, long-term unemployment was 198,000—a growth of around 89 per cent over the six years, from 1990 to 1996. You have to ask yourself: what chance would this gentleman have had, if any, if he had been unemployed in that period? The other sad reality is, unfortunately under a Queensland Beattie-led Labor government, we are unable to meet the benchmark that the Howard government has set across the country and, in fact, has the highest unemployment level of all mainland Australian states.

Ms Jackson interjecting—

The SPEAKER—The member for Hasluck is warned!

Mr BROUGH—That is from a Premier who has claimed five per cent. But to your gentleman can I say that under the CES he would have had 300 sites on which to gain access anywhere in Australia. Today there are some 2,000 sites. There is great innovation in the Job Network, whereas under the
Labor Party he would have been subject to one training course after another, sitting in a room, probably basket weaving, with no relevance whatsoever to his own IT aspirations. Today there can be specific targeted resources placed to him. What I must ask the Leader of the Opposition and the member who asked the question is: if you want to deny people opportunities, continue to do what you are doing now—that is, to say, as people did in this place one after another last night, that there are Australians out there who are not doing the right thing, and you have a spokesman who wants—

Mr McClelland—Who’s ‘you’?

Mr BROUGH—My apologies, Mr Speaker. To make it amply clear: you have a spokesman in the form of the family services shadow minister who is referring to unemployed people as scum. What we are saying—

The SPEAKER—The minister will come back to the question.

Mr BROUGH—I simply highlight the point that we will continue to work for the gentleman that you referred to—

Mr Swan—I raise a point of order, Mr Speaker. In this House yesterday the inaccuracy of that statement was exposed. I tabled—

The SPEAKER—The Manager of Opposition Business will resume his seat.

Mr Swan—I ask you to get him to withdraw that—

The SPEAKER—The Manager of Opposition Business is well aware that whether I like it or not is not the point; the minister did not refer to any individual person.

Opposition members—He did!

The SPEAKER—There are a number of people here defying the chair. Let me complete my statement. The minister did not refer to any individual member of this House as scum. He referred, as much as I may not like it, to a reference to unemployed people as scum. It was for that reason that I have not—

Mr Brereton interjecting—

The SPEAKER—Member for Kingsford-Smith, have you no sense of courtesy?

Mr Swan—Mr Speaker, the member said that I called unemployed people scum. I did not. That is a lie. I find it offensive. I want it withdrawn under—

The SPEAKER—The Manager of Opposition Business will resume his seat. The Manager of Opposition Business knows perfectly well that if he has been misrepresented there are facilities of the House to—

Mr Swan—Mr Speaker—

The SPEAKER—The Manager of Opposition Business will resume his seat until I complete my statement! The Manager of Opposition Business knows perfectly well that there are facilities of the House for that purpose. As soon as the statement was made, even though it did not refer to any member of the House, I interrupted the minister and required him to desist because you had yesterday indicated that that was a misrepresentation. That is more than is normally done by the occupier of the chair. I have exercised my responsibility and the minister has the call.

Mr Swan—I raise a point of order, Mr Speaker. I find the statement offensive and I ask that it be withdrawn. Under standing orders 75 and 76, I ask you to ask the minister to withdraw the statement because I find it offensive. I have also been misrepresented, but I find the statement offensive. I ask you to ask him to withdraw it.

Mr Abbott—On the point of order, Mr Speaker: the member may well object to the statement, but the statement referred to his words as quoted in the Australian newspaper, and he did not take a personal explanation to clarify that matter on the first available day. Members cannot come in here and withdraw things when it suits them; they cannot explain things when it suits them. If he truly objected and if he truly thought that he had been misrepresented, why didn’t he do it on the first available day instead of leaving it on the record? He did not do this on Tuesday of this week.

Mr Swan—Mr Speaker—

The SPEAKER—The Manager of Opposition Business will resume his seat. Standing order 75 rightly and responsibly says:
No Member may use offensive words against either House of the Parliament or any Member thereof ... 

It was for that reason that I indicated two things. The Manager of Opposition Business has the opportunity to indicate where he has been misrepresented. The forms of the House allow that at the conclusion of question time. In addition to that, I had taken the unusual step of requiring the minister not to pursue the argument he had used because of the statement made by the Manager of Opposition Business yesterday and the very statement made by the member for Batman when he sought for me to intervene in this way in these sorts of matters. The matter is now concluded and the minister has the call.

Mr Swan—I raise a point of order, Mr Speaker.

Honourable members interjecting—

The SPEAKER—There are a number of people who clearly would like not to represent their seats for an hour, and I would be happy to accommodate them. I call the Manager of Opposition Business.

Mr Swan—My point of order is standing order 78 and it is very simple:

When the attention of the Speaker is drawn to words used, he or she shall determine whether or not they are offensive or disorderly.

Mr Speaker, do you determine the use of that word? Given that yesterday, at the nearest opportunity that you gave me, I took the opportunity to explain how I had been misrepresented, will you now, under standing order 78, given that I have requested you to ask him to withdraw the offensive words, ask him to do so?

The SPEAKER—I have already indicated to the Manager of Opposition Business, as must have been self-evident to everybody in the chamber and the gallery, that I was unhappy with the words used, and for that reason I ask him to desist. That is what the facilities of the House provide. There was no reference that provides an opportunity for withdrawal, because there was no reference made to an individual member. I call the minister.

Mr Swan—Mr Speaker—

The SPEAKER—I have dealt with the point of order.

Mr Swan—It is a follow-up, Mr Speaker. It is my right to take a point of order.

The SPEAKER—I have not denied you that right; I simply want to indicate that I have dealt with that point of order.

Mr Swan—Mr Speaker, I have a following point of order: given that previous ruling, I ask you to read closely the Hansard and the text of the minister’s remarks because he specifically named me in his remarks. If you find that to be the case, will you ask him to withdraw?

The SPEAKER—The member for Lilley will resume his seat! I will be very happy to closely read the Hansard and I am sure the member for Lilley will be as well. I hope that my Hansard memory today is as good as it fortunately was yesterday.

Mr BROUGH—The Job Network is delivering a more individualised, more targeted level of service than any employment services in the history of this country and it is now recognised by the OECD as a leading employment services regime in the world.

Mr Ripoll interjecting—

The SPEAKER—The member for Oxley is warned!

Information Technology: Skills

Mr CIOBO (3.38 p.m.)—My question is addressed to the Minister for Education, Science and Training. Would the minister inform the House of steps being taken by the government to improve the information technology skills of older Australians? Is the minister aware of other comments or policies in relation to this important issue?

Dr NELSON—I thank the member for Moncrieff for his concern for, and commitment to, maturing members of his community and in particular in relation to information and communication technologies. All federal governments and their budgets lay foundation stones for the future of a country. This year, the Treasurer has released the Intergenerational Report and there are also measures which effectively change the lives of human beings. One of those, for which the member for Moncrieff among many others
was an advocate, was a $23.2 million program to bring basic computer skills and computer information to 46,000 Australians who are looking for a job and who have never learned how to use a computer. This program will link those Australians to other Australians who are already proficient in the use of information technologies.

We need to ask ourselves how we would feel if we lived in a country where everybody was talking about emails and the Internet on a day-to-day basis, and about information communication technology, yet you did not even know how to turn a computer on. People like Kay Binet, a lady in her early sixties in Hobart, who told the *Australian* in June 2000 under a heading that read—

"Opposition members interjecting—"

**The SPEAKER**—If no-one has a point of order, the minister has the call.

**Dr NELSON**—In June 2000, the *Australian* ran a headline referring to ‘lost souls’ and one of the people referred to as being amongst the lost souls was a woman in her early sixties called Kay Binet. She said:

I find it a bit embarrassing because I am so dumb—

not being able to use a computer. This program aims not only to connect the Kay Binets in Australia to the rest of the country, but also to new and emerging—

**Mrs Crosio**—Mr Speaker, on a point of order through you to the minister: is it relevant to name people in answers while it is not relevant and therefore not legal to name them in questions?

**The SPEAKER**—I thank the Chief Opposition Whip for a very timely intervention. The answer is yes. Under the standing orders there are—

**Mr Pyne**—You should know better!

**The SPEAKER**—The member for Sturt should know better as well! As the Chief Opposition Whip is aware, there are standing orders for questions and standing orders for answers, and all occupiers of the chair are obliged to exercise them accordingly. The minister is in order and I recognise him.

**Dr NELSON**—I am inviting honourable members to reflect on a statement from an Australian which says, ‘I find it’s a bit embarrassing because I am so dumb because I am not able to use a computer.’ As I have said, imagine living in a society where, on a day-to-day basis, we talk about the Internet, emails and connectedness and you are part of a country where you do not have the basic ability to use a computer. As an editorial in the Hobart *Mercury* said two days ago:

Literacy is the key to unleashing ... human potential, to overcoming humiliation and underemployment and empowering people to live richer and more satisfying lives.

And the same can certainly be said for computer literacy.

I am asked about other policies and comments and I must say that I was staggered when I opened the *Australian* newspaper on 21 May 2002. Under the headline, ‘Budget skill fund is a “joke”:’

Dimension Data Learning Services general manager Steve Ross said ... the mature-age training program was a waste of money. ‘These are people who don’t like computers—this won’t make any difference because they are cyber-phobic,’ he said. ‘They have been left behind on purpose because the don’t like computers.’

As denigrating and humiliating as those remarks would be to the Kay Binets and other Australians who are not yet able to turn on a computer, you would have to ask yourself what kind of person, what kind of organisation, could endorse and give currency to such demeaning remarks? I suspect that the member for Braddon is sitting there asking himself the same question. The member for Port Adelaide would be asking himself who on earth would be so offensive to people who are not yet computer literate. The member for Lyons, perhaps better than anybody else in this House, knows what it is like to not be able to be literate in fundamental skills. The member for Hotham, the Leader of the Opposition, knows who would endorse such remarks; he knows what organisation would not only endorse but disseminate such remarks, and it is Senator Kate Lundy on behalf of the Australian Labor Party! On 20 May, attached to the budget press release from Senator Lundy were the offensive remarks of Mr Ross, repeated verbatim and
widely disseminated throughout the community.

The Leader of the Opposition told Liam Bartlett on 9 March this year that the opposition would be judged by the things for which it stood, not the things which it opposed. I invite the Leader of the Opposition and the Australian Labor Party to reflect on this: last week on behalf of the government I announced a $130 million national centre for excellence in information and communication technology at the former Eveleigh railway yards in Sydney. Information and communication technology are the railway lines for the 21st century. But what the Labor Party is saying is that the ‘no ticket, no start’ dictum will apply to a section of Australia where they will say: ‘We will not even give you a ticket. You will not even be allowed to get on the train. The train for information and communication technology is going to pull out and it is going to leave you behind.’ I say to the Leader of the Opposition—and the other sneering, laughing members of the ALP behind him—

The SPEAKER—Minister!

Dr NELSON—you should remember that on a day-to-day basis when you sit there behind your laptop in question time online to Sharan Burrow—

The SPEAKER—Minister!

Dr NELSON—that it is the hard work and taxes of everyday Australians that are funding the provision of information technology services to you.

Mr Beazley—Mr Speaker, on a point of order: that is such offensive drivel; nevertheless, part of the offensiveness of it is that the remarks are directed to you, Mr Speaker. They are pretty irrelevant to everything else—

The SPEAKER—The member for Brand will know that I have been quite sensitive about this matter. In fact what the minister was saying, and I do not doubt that it was a genuine error on the part of the member for Brand, was that he would say to someone or other that these things applied. The acid test for this is for the person who is addressing the parliament to be addressing their remarks through the chair, so accusations that are levelled at ‘you’ will not be appropriate but a statement about ‘I want to say to someone why would you’ is, of course, in context.

Dr NELSON—Mr Speaker, in concluding, this is the worst and most offensive form of intellectual elitism that I have experienced for a considerable time. The Leader of the Opposition—

Mr Bevis interjecting—

The SPEAKER—The member for Brisbane is warned!

Dr NELSON—should dissociate the Australian Labor Party from these remarks today and discipline Senator Lundy and make sure there are some things that are worthy of support in this parliament by all members of parliament. If the Labor Party is not prepared to support 46,000 Australians in learning how to turn on a computer, to word process, use the Internet and receive and send an email, then you are not worthy to be here.

The SPEAKER—I would indicate briefly—

Mr Crean interjecting—

The SPEAKER—Leader of the Opposition, I am endeavouring to address the chamber! I would indicate briefly to the minister that in fact his last reference to ‘you’ was an inappropriate one. Prior to that, they were in context.

Mr Howard—Mr Speaker, I ask that further questions be placed on the Notice Paper.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE: ADDITIONAL ANSWERS

Trade: Honey Imports

Mr TRUSS (Wide Bay—Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry)—Mr Speaker, I seek the indulgence of the chair to add to an answer.

The SPEAKER—The minister may proceed.

Mr TRUSS—The honourable member for Calare asked me yesterday a question about the imports of honey from China. Whilst he is not present today, I understand there has been some interest in this matter. As outlined in my reply yesterday, Australia seeks to set rigorous health standards for food sold on the
Thursday, 30 May 2002

Australian market—and welcome to the member for Calare. Those standards are set by the Australia New Zealand Food Authority. So, in a sense, the question yesterday may have best been directed to the Minister for Health and Ageing, who has responsibility for ANZFA. AQIS’s role is to administer and to undertake the testing programs required by ANZFA.

ANZFA and the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service are aware of recent action overseas to recall product and tighten controls on the import of Chinese honey as a result of concern regarding residue contamination from an antibiotic called chloramphenicol. I note that both of those agencies have been working closely with the Australian Honey Bee Industry Council on this issue. It is true that in high concentrations chloramphenicol can cause human health risks. However, ANZFA has assessed all of the available international test data for residues in honey and has concluded that the very low levels of residues reported pose a negligible risk to human health in this country.

Nevertheless, ANZFA has requested AQIS to carry out surveillance testing to ensure ongoing monitoring of the situation. Australia does not have a capacity to test for this antibiotic in honey. But I am advised that the Australian Government Analytical Laboratories will be in a position to test for chloramphenicol residues by mid-June 2002—that is, in a couple of weeks time. At this stage, having considered all the information available on the issue, ANZFA advises that there are no grounds to warrant recall of the product. However, if testing reveals any residues on imported products, AQIS has the authority to destroy or order the re-export or direct non-compliant consignments for appropriate treatment. I hope that that additional information will assure the House that this matter is being actively monitored but ANZFA is satisfied that there are no risks to human health from product at this stage.

QUESTIONS TO THE SPEAKER

Ruling by the Speaker

Mr SWAN (3.51 p.m.)—I have a question to you, Mr Speaker. It concerns your ruling on standing order 144(a) regarding the use of a name in a question. Can I draw your attention to House of Representatives Practice, page 531, which draws significantly from a ruling from Speaker Snedden given in the House of Representatives on 4 November 1977:

There is no reason why a person should not be named in a question provided that, if the reference is opprobrious to the reputation of the person, the question ought to be put on notice. If a name were used for the purpose of identifying the matter on which the minister was being questioned, I would not require the question to be taken on notice.

What I am really saying is that, until recently anyway, it has been the practice of this House to allow names to be used for specific purposes. I draw your attention to your ruling on the question asked by the member for Newcastle. I ask you to reflect upon the question that she asked because it is fairly clear on reading that question that the use of the name Mr Reg Wadwell was absolutely essential to the meaning of the question and therefore within the standing orders. I would also submit that that was the case with the question from the member for Oxley. In the case of the member for Newcastle, the question was: ‘Mr Reg Wadwell ... who has applied for 175 jobs since becoming unemployed’. It would seem to be absolutely essential to the meaning of the question that the person’s name could be used, particularly when it could be authenticated.

If it is going to be the practice of this House that the use of names in this sense is ruled out of order on a blanket basis, I believe you have set a new precedent in this House. Mr Speaker, I ask you to reflect on these matters. I ask you to reflect on the question from the member for Newcastle and on the question from the member for Oxley. I ask you to have a look at page 531 of House of Representatives Practice, particularly the detail of the ruling of Speaker Snedden, and come back to the House next week with a response to the matters that I have raised.

The SPEAKER—Did the member for Lilley just use the phrase ‘on a blatant basis’?
Mr Swan—‘On a blanket basis’.

The SPEAKER—Thank you for that clarification. I will spend a little more time than I have right now to look at page 531 of House of Representatives Practice. I will, in due course, come back to the Manager of Opposition Business and endeavour to find something that facilitates both practice and the authenticity of questions. I do not think it took much imagination to leave the gentleman’s name out of that last question, so I do not think the questioner was disadvantaged, but I will take a look at the issue raised.

PERSONAL EXPLANATIONS
Ms KING (Ballarat) (3.54 p.m.)—Mr Speaker, I wish to make a personal explanation.

The SPEAKER—Does the honourable member claim to have been misrepresented?
Ms KING—I do.

The SPEAKER—Please proceed.
Ms KING—In question time, the Minister for Regional Services, Territories and Local Government claimed that I giggled. Minister, I was laughing at you, not giggling!

The SPEAKER—The member for Ballarat will resume her seat. The member for Ballarat knows that that was an abuse of the standing orders. She is also aware, if my memory serves me well, that she has been warned. If it were not for the fact that she is a new member, the people of Ballarat would not be represented for the next hour.

QUESTIONS TO THE SPEAKER
Member for Werriwa: Withdrawal of Comments
Mrs IRWIN (3.55 p.m.)—On Thursday, 16 May, Hansard of 15 May was delivered to all members offices in Parliament House showing the whole text of the member for Werriwa’s speech. As certain comments by the member for Werriwa have been expunged from the Hansard, will these Hansards be recalled from members offices for a Hansard burning ceremony, or can we auction them as a collector’s item?

The SPEAKER—The member for Fowler will resume her seat. The matter raised by the member for Fowler was concluded yesterday, as I indicated in my remarks.

Minister for Employment Services
Mr LEO McLEAY (3.55 p.m.)—Mr Speaker, are you aware that in 1981 your distinguished predecessor Speaker Snedden said:

In the past there has been a ruling that it was not unparliamentary to make an accusation against a group as distinct from an individual. That is not a ruling which I will continue. I think that if an accusation is made against members of the House which, if made against any one of them, would be unparliamentary and offensive, it is in the interests of the comity of this House that it should not be made against all as it could not be made against one.

He speaks a little bit familiarly!

Otherwise, it may become necessary for every member of the group against whom the words are alleged to stand up and personally withdraw himself or herself from the accusation ... I ask all honourable members to cease using unparliamentary expressions against a group or all members which would be unparliamentary if used against an individual.

In the light of your remarks in relation to my previous point of order, where you said that you were relying upon rulings of former speakers, I remind you that the current issue of House of Representatives Practice says that this practice has been followed by succeeding speakers. Bearing that in mind—and it would seem today that you have moved away from that—could you look at what you said today in response to my point of order and the point of order of the distinguished member for Brand? Could you then come back to the House as to whether we now need to prosecute these matters individually, or will you go along with the ruling of your distinguished predecessors, in particular, Speaker Snedden, and stand by the remark, ‘I think that if an accusation is made against members of the House which, if made against any one of them, would be unparliamentary...it should not be made against all’?

The SPEAKER—I invite the member for Watson to closely follow remarks when they are made, and even to do as I sometimes do and make a note of them. Had he done so, he
would be aware that, much as I may not have liked the minister’s comments, he did not call a member ‘scum’, nor did he refer to a group in that way. He said that ‘a member had called the unemployed that’. It was in fact a misrepresentation which would have been dealt with better by someone claiming to have been misrepresented. It is for that reason that I took action and required him—

Mr Brough interjecting—

The SPEAKER—Minister, will you resume your seat until I have finished addressing the House. That is why I required him not to continue to make that reference out of deference to the member for Batman, who had raised the matter yesterday, and the Manager of Opposition Business. I am astonished that my additional action over and above that taken by former speakers has not been recognised by a former speaker, instead of being questioned by one.

Mr Brough—Mr Speaker, in your address just then you said that I had misrepresented the member for Lilley. In fact, I have not misrepresented the member for Lilley. At no stage have I done anything other than utter the words that he has used.

The SPEAKER—The minister will resume his seat. The matter has been dealt with expeditiously.

Member for Kingsford-Smith

Mr ZAHRA (3.59 p.m.)—Mr Speaker, in question time today you asked the member for Kingsford-Smith, ‘Have you no courtesy?’ That was in response to his interjections at a time when the government minister, the Minister for Employment Services, was engaging in some conduct which we thought was inappropriate.

The SPEAKER—The member for McMillan will resume his seat.

Mr ZAHRA—I am just about to come to my point, Mr Speaker.

The SPEAKER—I want to address an issue raised by the member for McMillan. I invite him to resume his seat. I point out to the member for McMillan that my intervention against, unusually, the member for Kingsford-Smith was because at the time I was addressing the House and he was uncharacteristically attempting to do so as well. If the member for McMillan has anything further to add, I will hear him, but that was that point.

Mr Zahra—Thank you, Mr Speaker. Given that you thought it was appropriate to make that comment to the member for Kingsford-Smith today, I wonder why it is that you did not make the same comment to the Minister for Employment Services or the Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations when they engaged in quite disgraceful conduct—

The SPEAKER—The member for McMillan will resume his seat.

Mr Zahra—and the personal denigration of people on this side?

The SPEAKER—The member for McMillan will resume his seat!

Mr Zahra—I have not made a reflection on you, Mr Speaker; I was seeking to ask you a question.

The SPEAKER—I believe that if the member for McMillan looks at the Hansard, he will discover that his comments are dripping with reflections on the chair and he will—

Mr Zahra—I do not think that they are dripping with reflections on the chair.

The SPEAKER—Member for McMillan! The member for McMillan has but one more choice: he will stand, withdraw all of those reflections and be seated, or I will require him to leave the House.

Mr Zahra—I withdraw any reflections on you, Mr Speaker; I was seeking to ask you a question.

The SPEAKER—I believe that if the member for McMillan looks at the Hansard, he will discover that his comments are dripping with reflections on the chair and he will—

Mr Zahra—I withdraw any reflections on you, Mr Speaker.

The SPEAKER—And be seated. Is the Manager of Opposition Business denying the member for McMillan the call?

Mr Swan—I wanted to deal with the remarks that were just made by the minister for employment, Mr Speaker.
The SPEAKER—I do not believe that the member for McMillan had concluded his business.

Mr Zahra—Thank you, Mr Speaker. I take the opportunity again to make clear that I was not making any personal reflection on you but was seeking—

The SPEAKER—that matter has been dealt with; I want to deal with the next matter.

Mr Zahra—Yes, and I wanted to ask you a question in relation to that. Given that it was appropriate for you to make that comment to the member for Kingsford-Smith today and given the fact that the ministers who I have previously referred to engaged in what I think was very discourteous behaviour to people on this side of the parliament, could you explain to the House and to me, Mr Speaker, why it was that, at a similar juncture in the comments which they made, you did not seek to ask them the same question that you had asked the member for Kingsford-Smith?

The SPEAKER—the member for McMillan will excuse himself from the House, under the provisions of standing order 304A.

PERSONAL EXPLANATIONS

Mr SWAN (Lilley) (4.03 p.m.)—Mr Speaker, on I think three occasions now, the Minister for Employment Services has misrepresented my position in the House.

The SPEAKER—is the Manager of Opposition Business seeking to make a personal explanation?

Mr SWAN—Yes, I am.

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

Mr SWAN—I certainly do.

The SPEAKER—the Manager of Opposition Business may proceed.

Mr SWAN—On a third occasion, I think, in this House the Minister for Employment Services misrepresented my position—just a few minutes ago. How many times does he have to do it before you discipline him?

The SPEAKER—as everyone in the House is aware, this is obviously going to be a problem for occupiers of the chair so long as assemblies like this exist, and may it be forever. That of course is simply because every occupier of the chair will presume, understandably, that any statement being made by anyone is being made in good faith. What I have attempted to do—

Mr Leo McLeay interjecting—

The SPEAKER—the member for Watson will excuse himself from the House under the provisions of 304A.

Mr Leo McLeay interjecting—

The SPEAKER—the member for Watson runs the risk of being excused for an even longer period of time. As the Manager of Opposition Business is aware, every occupier of the chair rightly presumes that the statements being made by members from both sides are being made in good faith. For that reason, the chair is generally reluctant to intervene. In this instance, I have required a statement that caused offence to you or the member for Batman not to be pursued.

Mr Swan—But not to be withdrawn.

The SPEAKER—the Manager of Opposition Business, by reason of his office, is expected to understand the standing orders; there is no such facility. For that reason, I have dealt with this much more firmly than previous occupiers of the chair, and I do not expect to sit here arguing the toss over a matter that has been already dealt with.

Mr Swan—We’ll be arguing the toss, Mr Speaker; I can assure you of that.

The SPEAKER—I warn the Manager of Opposition Business!

Mr BROUGH (Longman—Minister for Employment Services) (4.05 p.m.)—Mr Speaker, I want to make a personal explanation.

The SPEAKER—Does the minister claim to have been misrepresented?

Mr BROUGH—Yes, I do.

The SPEAKER—the minister may proceed.

Mr BROUGH—at the conclusion of question time yesterday, the member for
Lilley made a personal explanation where he said that I had misrepresented him in the House. I would like to place on the record that I quoted from the Australian newspaper of Tuesday, 21 May. The exact quote in the article—purported to be the comments of the shadow minister—is ‘scum and they need to be weeded out’.

Mr McMullan—Point of order! Point of order!

The SPEAKER—The member for Fraser knows that that is not necessary.

Mr McMullan—I apologise to you for doing that—

The SPEAKER—Thank you.

Mr McMullan—The reason was that the minister continued to read the matter about which I was raising my point of order.

The SPEAKER—I hear what the member for Fraser is saying. I was listening very—

Mr McMullan—But I was raising a different point of order.

The SPEAKER—I was listening very closely to the minister because I did not want the matter repeated. I believe you may have been a little premature in your interruption. I will listen closely to the minister. Do you have a further point of order?

Mr McMullan—Yes, the minister needs to be referring to a matter in which he was misrepresented, not describing whether or not he accurately misrepresented the member for Lilley.

The SPEAKER—I understand what the member for Fraser is saying.

Mr BROUGH—Mr Speaker, I seek your clarification. I presume I am within the standing orders because I have been misrepresented at the dispatch box by the member for Lilley.

The SPEAKER—I am listening to the minister.

Mr BROUGH—I have pointed out that article. Mr Speaker, further to clarify that point, on 2UE with Mr Steve Price—

The SPEAKER—I need the minister to come to the point at which he has been misrepresented.

Mr BROUGH—I have been misrepresented, Mr Speaker, by the fact that the member for Lilley has misrepresented the comments that I have made in this House and has said that they did not actually occur, when they had, and I am simply seeking to put on the record the record which states that I am in fact on solid ground.

The SPEAKER—The minister has indicated where he has been misrepresented, which is what the standing order provides. He now has the facility to table whatever is necessary to reinforce that point of view.

Mr BROUGH—I table the article from 21 May in the Australian, ‘Rorters are scum, says ALP’.

QUESTIONS TO THE SPEAKER

Mrs CROSIO (4.08 p.m.)—In a different vein, I questioned you, Mr Speaker, yesterday regarding a statement you made on page 2337 of Hansard of Tuesday, 28 May. In my question to you, Mr Speaker, I would like to have Hansard and the House record the fact that I may have inferred that you quoted that you were going to invite the minister back to your office. That is not the case. What is in Hansard is, verbatim, what you said on that particular occasion.

The SPEAKER—I thank the Chief Opposition Whip.

Mr Martin Ferguson—On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I take it—from the comments you have made in referring to an exchange that has occurred between you and me concerning the events that are not dissimilar to what you have referred to on a number of occasions today—that, as a result of the exchange that has just occurred during the course of which you asked that what has been sought to be suggested by the Minister for Employment Services about the member for Lilley will no longer occur in this House, you regard the matter as settled and it would be unparliamentary for him to continue such an unjustified attack on the member for Lilley. In essence, Mr Speaker, is this exchange between the member for Lilley and the Minister for Employment Services finished once and for all so as the activities of the House can be facilitated in a proper way?
Mr Abbott—Mr Speaker, on the point of order: I put it to you that it is quite against the procedures and practices of this House for someone to be able to say something and then gag discussion of it by taking a bodgy personal explanation. It is quite out of order, Mr Speaker, and I put two points to you. First of all, the member for Lilley did not seek to clear this matter up on the first available day, the Tuesday of this week. 

Mr Swan interjecting—

The SPEAKER—I would point out to the Manager of Opposition Business firstly his status in the House and, secondly, that at no stage has he been interrupted by the Leader of the House, so references made to the member for Kingsford-Smith might be more appropriately addressed to him. 

Mr Abbott—The second point I make, Mr Speaker, is that obviously the Australian newspaper stands by the story because no retraction or apology has been printed. So, Mr Speaker, I do not believe that the member for Lilley is entitled to try to gag debate on this matter in the way he has. 

Mr Beazley—On a point of order, Mr Speaker: people on this side of the House have been ejected for challenging your ruling and the comments that you have made, and you have persisted with ruling on the matter related to the personal explanation offered by the Manager of Opposition Business. I would submit to you, Mr Speaker, that that intervention by the Leader of the House was a direct reflection on those rulings, challenging them and seeking to reintroduce that matter. I urge you to deal with him in the same way. 

The SPEAKER—I point out to the member for Brand that I have made no ruling and it is highly unlikely that any occupier of the chair ever will on this matter or would be able to enforce such a ruling if it were made. I would remind the member for Batman of the matter he raised with me yesterday that was causing him some angst. I was relieved to discover that 16 May was not that many sitting days apart from the occasion on which he drew my attention to it. 

Mr Martin Ferguson—I wasn’t here for one of them. 

The SPEAKER—Which hardly reflects badly on the chair. I also point out to him, and I am sorry I do not have the Hansard with me, that on the same page on which this matter was raised on 16 May, I had earlier offered a fairly comprehensive explanation of the very issue being dealt with now. Both sides of the House are right, and the same arguments would be raised no matter who the government or the opposition happened to be. There is no way in which the occupier of the chair can precensor the remarks that people may want to make. Equally, there is an obligation that everyone faces to deal honourably with each other. That is the circumstance that has applied for 100 years. I have already intervened to discourage the minister from doing the very thing that was causing the member for Batman and the member for Lilley angst. That is more than has happened in the past. I cannot give the member for Batman the guarantee he seeks and neither can any other occupier of the chair. But, in an effort to raise standards in the House, I would hope we would all endeavour to make statements that are both parliamentary and can be authenticated in future. Of course there will be occasions when we will slip, and I will try to be alert to those occasions. I will draw the attention of the member for Batman, to whom I was going to offer a cup of tea in the office—and the offer still stands—to the statement that I had made on the page that he referred to on 16 May. 

Mr Martin Ferguson—Much better than drinks Monday night. 

The SPEAKER—in that case the member for Batman does not have to accept. 

PAPERS 

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Leader of the House) (4.13 p.m.)—Papers are tabled in accordance with the list circulated earlier today. Details of the papers will be recorded in the Votes and Proceedings, and I move: That the House take note of the following paper: 

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATIONS, INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AND THE ARTS Australian Competition and Consumer Commission telecommunications reports—Report 1: Telecommunications competitive safeguards;
Debate (on motion by Mr Swan) adjourned:

MATTERS OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Employment

The SPEAKER—I have received a letter from the honourable member for Kingston proposing that a definite matter of public importance be submitted to the House for discussion, namely:

The failure of the Howard Government to ensure that disadvantaged job seekers receive appropriate training and support to give them a real opportunity to get a real job.

I call upon those members who approve of the proposed discussion to rise in their places.

More than the number of members required by the standing orders having risen in their places—

Mr COX (Kingston) (4.15 p.m.)—Who in this wide brown land thinks the best way to get a disadvantaged unemployed person off the dole is to give the boss a set of golf clubs? If this is the best idea the government has for helping the unemployed, it suggests the Prime Minister really is thinking about what he wants to do after his 64th birthday.

This is social entrepreneurship, Howard government style. I do not think it is illegal; I do not think it is misleading; I do not think it is outside the terms of the Job Network contracts. And that is the problem. It is the logical commercial outcome of the particular arrangements and incentives that the Howard government has put in place for the Job Network.

At its core, the public policy flaw in these Job Network arrangements is that the incentive structure makes Job Network providers put the weight of spending—spending what are public moneys provided for employment services—on outcomes that are better for Job Network providers, not for helping disadvantaged job seekers. You cannot spend the same money twice. If you spend it on a DVD, you cannot spend it on a job seeker.

Let us have a look at this promotional scheme. Since the minister declined to allow me to table it, I think I might read some of it into the public record. It starts:

Take on Job Ready Graduates through Mission Employment and earn JOB READY REWARDS

There is a clue in the first part of this: ‘Job Ready Graduates.’ This is money that is being applied to get people who are already job ready a better place in the queue for job vacancies. There is nothing the matter with that in principle except for a little problem in the way that it is being done.

In the previous government’s labour market programs we used to provide a $1,000 start-up grant for placing people who were on the same sort of list. But it was there to cover the cost of putting them on. It was not a kickback to the human resources manager for putting on a particular person over another. It goes on:

Another value added benefit for you and your business from Mission Employment.

I would say it is another value added benefit for the human resources manager.

This job ready graduate placement applies between 18 March of this year and 17 May of this year. The reason that it is being done at the moment is that this goes to one of the outcomes for the Job Network provider. This is the last ditch bid to pick up as many placements and as many outcome payments as possible before—

Mr Brough—it is to get more people jobs.

Mr COX—it is not getting any additional people jobs. These are jobs that would have been filled by somebody. This is Job Network money being applied to increase the outcome payments that Mission Australia will receive and also to improve the star rating that Mission Australia will have when you consider the roll overs of the present Job Network contract and when you consider—or I hope when your department considers—where job contracts will be placed in the next round.
It is not being spent to do something for a job seeker, although it will benefit an individual job seeker over another. It is certainly not creating any new job. It is simply creating a better commercial position for this employment provider. This employment provider is Mission Australia’s Mission Employment. The minister opposite seems to think that the fact that it is a charitable organisation should exempt it from any public scrutiny of the way it is dealing with job seekers.

I think Mission Australia is adopting a very commercial approach to all of this, and it is a commercial approach that is consistent with the incentive contracts. I am in fact less concerned in this MPI, as my letter to the Speaker said, about the activities of Mission Australia than I am about what this scheme says about the structure and incentives in the present Job Network arrangements. In the time that I have had to consider the arrangements that are in your discussion paper for your changes which were announced in the budget—although with very little detail—I have not seen anything in that that says that this would stop. I have asked you today: would this sort of thing be funded out of the job seeker account? I got no answer. You defended this scheme and demonstrated that you could not work out that this scheme was not creating any jobs and was not actually spending any money on job seekers.

In the middle of the pamphlet we get to the chase. We get to the incentives. The pamphlet reads:

Employing through Mission Employment is now even more rewarding

Job Ready

Mission Employment’s training and matching facilities provide employers with a wide choice of pre-screened JOB READY applicants ready for immediate start. As an added bonus, if you employ a Mission Employment Job Ready Graduate between 18/03/02 and 17/05/02 you will qualify for an exciting choice of reward.

It’s Simple

1. Lodge a vacancy with Mission Employment between 18/03/02 and 17/05/02.
2. Employ a Mission Employment Job Ready Graduate.
3. After your new employee has been on board for 13 continuous weeks you can choose a reward from this catalogue.

What are the rewards? No. 1 is:
Enjoy a top quality viewing with this 51cm Intensi flat screen TV (RRP $699).

Or you might choose the following:
The Riva Zoom 150—the world’s smallest/lightest 35mm format lens-shutter camera with 4x zoom ratio.

It is a Minolta and its recommended retail price is $599. It continues:
Here’s a DVD player with a difference—3 stacker trays for CDs, MP3 and video CDs with Karaoke! RRP $659.

That $659 would have been very nice for the member for Oxley’s constituent, who just needs a bit of money to finish an IT course so he might become ‘job ready’. It continues: The Super Kitchen Pack has everything you need—4 slice toaster, cordless kettle, Café espresso & capuccino machine, juice extractor, sandwich maker and 3 in 1 whisk/chopper/mixer.

In fact, everything you could ever want except for the proverbial set of steak knives. The recommended retail price for the package is $853. What rings alarm bells with me about that, Minister, is that that is a dollar value that is very close to the size of your proposed job seeker account.

Mr Brough interjecting—

Mr COX—I asked you to rule out whether this sort of promotion would be available under your new arrangements, and you have declined to give me an answer. Perhaps you might think about that in the next seven minutes. The catalogue items continue:

Choose a mens or ladies Seiko perpetual calendar Gold watch, 50m water resistant (RRP $699).

Something you might buy from Arthur Daley, isn’t it? But it continues:
This G-Max design 200w Hi Fi system features CD, twin cassette, AM/FM and full remote control (RRP $769).

Why not choose this TV & VCR combination as a great idea for staff training videos? This is the first time that something has been introduced into this that might actually have some benefit for the employer’s business, as
opposed to something that they might take home. Its recommended retail price is $608.

Item 8 is:
The Maxfli Power Cavity package features cavity flow system with oversize steel shaft irons and graphite driver. Includes 9” project style bag.

That is the golf clubs—$699. That is something that you can really apply to your business, isn’t it—a good round of golf!

Ms Macklin—Networking.

Mr COX—Yes, networking. Item 9 says:
Buy something for your business, your family or yourself with $500 worth of Myer Grace Bros gift vouchers—or—

Take a break with 50 Break Free points valid for great accommodation—

Mr Martin Ferguson—Did he approve it?

Mr COX—I do not think he ticked it off. I do not think they sent it to him and he said, ‘This is an authorised expenditure.’

Ms Macklin—We want to know if he is going to rule it out.

Mr COX—He certainly indicated that he thought it was a pretty reasonable idea when he answered the question—he could not see any problems with it. Item 10 is:

Take a break with 50 Break Free points valid for great accommodation and tour deals from the extensive Break Free catalogue. This is exception travel value. Ask your Mission Employment representative for catalogue details. Trips include Sheraton hotels, Great Barrier Reef tours, Sydney Heli-Scenic Tours, Barossa Valley adventures and much more in all states.

I am into wine tourism, but I am not into wine tourism at the expense of job seekers, Minister. Then there is the catch-all option.

If your human resources manager thinks that it is really not appropriate to be taking these personal items, there is the charity option, which is:

If you are unable to accept goods, you may choose a reward and we will send it to your nominated charity. Alternatively, we will donate $400 on your behalf to the charity of your choice.

Ms Macklin—What about the job seeker?

Mr COX—Yes, the poor old job seeker. Why is this a problem? The minister has said very little since March when the independent inquiry into the Job Network by the Productivity Commission came out. You have been diligently working away trying to come up with something to cover your tracks—something new that you can put out there and say if this was ever raised: ‘There was a problem, but we’ve fixed it.’ I do not think you have fixed any of the problems that I have raised today. And, from my looking at the structure of your new Job Network package, I do not think it fixes any of the problems that the Productivity Commission has raised. Let us start with the first one—parking. These are the Productivity Commission’s words, not mine:

There is evidence that a substantial proportion of job seekers are ‘parked’—that is, receive a minimal level of service. This is a problem, as active participation by the job seeker in job search or training appears to be positively correlated with service levels.

So there is the first problem.

Ms Macklin—So have you fixed that?

Mr COX—No.

Mr COX—The member for Jagajaga is entirely right: there is nothing in the minister’s draft employment paper that fixes parking. The next item is ‘creaming’:

It could be argued that the capacity for re-reerrals makes it easier for Job Network providers to ‘cream’—again, the Productivity Commission’s words, not mine—to only handle job seekers for whom a job can be found easily and cheaply.

That is what this sort of thing is all about. It is about finding jobs quickly and cheaply for people who are job ready; it is not about what intensive assistance is supposed to be all about, which is giving people training and giving people support to overcome their disadvantages so that they become job ready and can get a job and can compete. That is what it is all about, Minister.

If you think that your Job Network to date has been doing a terrific job on behalf of all of these people, have a look at what the Productivity Commission says on page 6.21 about how often a large proportion of job seekers get to see their IA provider. There is
a continuum here—you like continuums. It shows that, under the present arrangements, 32 per cent of them see their Job Network provider about once a month or less. That is the only thing that your new system is going to change. (Time expired)

Mr BROUGH (Longman—Minister for Employment Services) (4.30 p.m.)—I might as well start by also quoting from the Productivity Commission, just to put everything into context that the shadow minister has said. It says:

Delivery of employment services has been hampered in the past by inflexibility, lack of choice and diversity, the absence of competition and unclear objectives and outcomes. The key advantages of a purchaser-provider approach entailing outcome orientation, competition and choice are that it sets out clear objectives and provides strong incentives for finding better ways of achieving job outcomes and for cost-efficiency.

They further go on to say:

The Job Network is better than previous arrangements mainly because it incorporates strong incentives for providers to improve their performance without direction by government.

Those two statements alone put a lie to what the shadow minister has said. It says:

Mr BROUGH—I accept the interjection from the member for Canberra.

Mr Cox—Then give everyone 10 TVs.

Mr BROUGH—I accept that is an ideological point of view that she puts and I accept that she says it in good faith. But let me put it this way to the member for Canberra and those opposite: it cost—and this is irrefutable—$184,000 of taxpayers’ money for every person that got a job that they otherwise would not have got, under the Labor’s failed system. You can buy an awful lot of golf clubs with $184,000 and, yes, you could buy everyone 10 televisions. You could buy them all a million televisions almost.

Mr Speaker, I make no apologies for ensuring that we deliver outcomes. And I would just like to point out to the shadow minister and those opposite that this is a performance program graph. See this peak up here, the big finger of employment? That is where unemployment services funding peaked under Simon Crean, the then minister for employment services.

Mr Cox interjecting—

Mr BROUGH—You think he is ashamed of that?

Mr Cox—I do not think he is ashamed of that.

Mr BROUGH—The shadow minister says is not ashamed of that. If he is not ashamed of the expenditure, maybe the shadow minister should be ashamed that outcomes went down while expenditure went through the roof.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. I.R. Causley)—Order! It is not the practice of the House to show charts such as that.

Mr BROUGH—Absolutely, Mr Deputy Speaker. I simply use that to demonstrate a final one: see that—outcomes going up. I take your point, Mr Deputy Speaker. Let me just spell this out in no uncertain terms for the shadow minister, who quite clearly cannot even read budget papers. He came into this place yesterday and stated that there will not be enough places for the unemployed, that the intensive support customised assistance is not uncapped. For the very first time the unemployed of this country, as they progress through the duration of unemployment, will have access, by right, to the most intensive support available.

What I can demonstrate with these outcomes is that since 1996 the cost of delivering employment to Australians has dropped by two-thirds—from $15,000 under a failed Labor system at a peak of $184,000 per net outcome—and you quibble about Mission Australia using an incentive, as you put it, and their human resources manager who may well put another job onto the network. I would suggest to you, Mr Deputy Speaker, and those opposite that, if a television is incentive enough for an organisation to place an additional job which in the end results in
an unemployed person getting 13 weeks employment, then that is a very good outcome. The fact is, as the Productivity Commission has said:

The Job Network is better than previous arrangements mainly because it incorporates strong incentives for providers to improve their performance without direction by government.

What the opposition seems to forget is that there is no payment of these outcome fees unless the person is in employment for 13 or 26 weeks. I do not think there is anyone opposite that would disagree that having someone in paid full-time employment is a good outcome. I do not think there is anyone opposite that would disagree that there are fewer people in unemployment today and more people in employment, and full-time employment, than under the Labor regime. This government has, under its stewardship, had more than 920,000 jobs created and it will be more than one million before the end of the year. Why? Because we have a flexible, targeted system that delivers jobs to the unemployed—and we make no apologies for it.

Mr Cox—They are recycled by IA several times!

The DEPUTY SPEAKER—Order! The member for Kingston. You had your opportunity.

Mr BROUGH—The shadow minister says we recycle people through intensive assistance. Under the failed Labor system some unemployed went through labour market programs not twice, not five times, but 21 times and more. That is recycling—asking people to sit in some dreary hall and do a basket-weaving course or some similarly unsuitable course, which is exactly what occurred under the Labor Party. They absolutely failed the taxpayer with this extraordinary expenditure, and outcomes went down. We have actually achieved outcomes that continue to climb. More people are getting jobs and the cost of delivering those is going down. I make no excuse for saying that this government is delivering better outcomes at less cost. We do not need to spend a fortune to do a better job than Labor. You turned to the Productivity Commission—let me just read a few of the submissions to the Productivity Commission. Here is one that says:

Job Network agencies play an important role in encouraging individuals and ensuring that they maintain a sense of hope and confidence and showing them how to reach their hidden labour market to identify vacancies which may never be advertised.

Perhaps some of those that you have been trying to allude to today would never be advertised. That is a submission by the Salvation Army. How about this:

A number of advantages flow from the shift from the purchases of services funding model towards a payment for outcomes model particularly for intensive assistance services which have the greatest degree of flexibility within the Job Network funding system.

Intensive assistance services which have the greatest degree of flexibility within the Job Network funding system.

Job seekers usually receive more personalised attention from providers. They are less likely to be offered inappropriate assistance, for example a training course when they need work experience, and the Job Network is more responsive to changes in the labour market and the needs of job seekers and their employers.

That is not the coalition’s submission; that is not someone that many people would say are friends necessarily of my side of politics. It is ACOSS, the Australian Council of Social Service. The Australian Council of Social Service says that there clearly—and I am not misquoting anyone, as we have not been misquoting your colleague all week. So there are any number of submissions from indigenous groups through to ACOSS through to Mission Australia through to the Salvation Army who all understand and appreciate that, because they are working inside the Job Network to help people find employment.

But we always know we can do better and we do not sit on our hands, even though we are actually now getting more people jobs. There are now 2,000 sites, opposed to 300 sites, delivering job seekers training. There is now greater access through the Internet so that people do not have to be just linked to jobs in their own little geographic quarter of the world but, if they want to move not only outside their immediate area but anywhere in Australia, they have access to all of the jobs.
We know that we can and will do better with an enhanced Job Network.

Just to recap, Mr Deputy Speaker, do not forget that, under Labor, unemployment when we came to government was 8.2 per cent; today it is 6.3 per cent and trending down. Long-term unemployment had an 89 per cent increase in the last six years of Labor—89 per cent while you spent $3,000 million, when it cost you $184,000 per net outcome through your most expensive program. And you have the hide to stand here and criticise this government for achieving real outcomes and real jobs.

Regrettably, there are still people that are long-term unemployed but, under the budget measures that we outlined only a couple of weeks ago, for the very first time all unemployed people, some of those that are currently in the virtual waiting room, will have access to intensive support customised assistance. It means that in the town that they are in they will work with their Job Network member and we will underpin this with a service guarantee. So for the first time an unemployed person will actually have a guaranteed level of service that must be delivered by the Job Network member.

We then come to the job seeker account. One of the criticisms by those opposite has been that there have not been enough resources placed into the hands of the unemployed. Through the job seeker account, the unemployed will be able to have purchased on their behalf through the Job Network any service or any product that will in fact assist them, from training to wage subsidies to travelling allowances to clothing to transport costs to interpreter assistance. We have a great safeguard, because the reality is that they cannot put one cent of this money into the bottom line of their business or their charity. Every cent of that money must be spent on the unemployed.

Mr Cox—Can they put it into this?

Mr BROUGH—The shadow minister holds up and waves around Mission Australia’s flier. Let me clarify unequivocally for you what they will do. If the Job Network members want to get access to the pot of gold which is outcome fees, the government pays them only when they get someone a job for 13 or 26 weeks. I think we would all agree that is a good income—at least 13 weeks employment. No arguments there, I am sure. Thank you—we get a nod. If they spend this money in a wanton, wasteful manner, all they are doing is hurting themselves because they cannot access the outcome fees. You will see every manager out there, every principal of every charity and every company that is a Job Network member, all 200 of them, striving better than any government bureaucracy could ever do to say, ‘How are we going to help these people?’ We do not need compliance here. What we need is an outcome. If it is golf clubs or if it is a television that actually buys someone an additional job and they get better outcomes, I can tell you that is so much better than $184,000.

Mr Ripoll—it is a disgrace.

Mr BROUGH—a disgrace is wasting $184,000 on getting someone a job. That is what it cost you unequivocally, and you continue to stand by your failed system. The opposition have no new ideas. They are bereft of any forward thinking. Have a look at what was said in other reports, for example, the international reports that have been written on the Job Network. Ask yourself why it is that places like Ireland, Britain and now Germany are looking at the kiosk system that we have, importing from Australia what we are doing. Why? Because it works.

The real regrettable issue here is that since the shadow minister uttered his words—I will not revisit those today but they are on the record all over the place—there has quite obviously been a break-out among those opposite. Last night the member Fremantle and the member for Fowler came in here and made all sorts of comments about the unemployed, distancing themselves from what the member for Lilley had said. Quite clearly there are those who still do not accept that there are a considerable number of unemployed people.

Mr Cox—Mr Deputy Speaker, I raise a point of order on relevance.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. I.R. Causley)—There is no point of order on
relevance. The minister is entirely relevant.  

(Quorum formed)

The DEPUTY SPEAKER—The honourable minister’s time has expired.

Mr RIPOLL (Oxley) (4.46 p.m.)—If this was a bill instead of an MPI, it would be called the ‘Government Golf Club Promotional Package for Cruisers Bill 2002’, because that is the extent to which the government has any empathy or any idea of what it is doing within the Job Network system. Probably the most significant matter that you notice when you start researching the issue of unemployment is that the Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations, Mr Abbott, and the Minister for Employment Services, Mr Brough, are more prominent in this debate than the people they are meant to help. This is not lost on the punters out there who are trying to get a job or the agencies and the people who keep an eye on the department and on the government.

Minister Abbott, a long-time offender in this area—and increasingly in need of drama and interpersonal relations training—is constantly using the media and his department to vilify the weak, the needy and those doing it tough. He calls them job snobs, bludgers and cruisers. He calls them anything but does not give them genuine assistance from the government to get a job. If people cannot get a job, then the government should give them real training and opportunities, apart from piecemeal activities such as Work for the Dole. Minister Brough, on the other hand, makes the headlines for many of the same reasons—and for a couple of others as well. It seems the minister is often more interested in defining people and pigeonholing them so he can later refer back to them as being in some sort of particular category, with his latest fetish being the so-called cruiser. This ensures there will always be a steady supply of someone to blame for the failings of the system that the Howard government has created. The Job Network system has now truly failed. The government-run national employment agency is to be closed—which was a strategy of the government right from the outset.

Mr Brough—Your party was to support it at the last election.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER—The minister is out of his place.

Mr RIPOLL—They planned to kill off the CES and replace it with a privatised system but then went further to remove the government from the process completely and remove themselves from the responsibility of trying to help job seekers altogether. Next month their mission possible will be complete. Sadly, the privatisation zeal of the government has had no benefits for the people it was meant to help. The very large—and closely starting to resemble the closed shop system—Job Network agencies are rubbing their hands with glee as they exploit the massive loopholes and lucrative payments for what is now being termed as ‘parking the unemployed’. This is a disgusting process and practice within the government—and which was approved by these two ministers—in their approach to the issue of the unemployed.

In the budget we saw just how far they are willing to push the boundaries by slashing benefits to the disabled and forcing them to join the endless job queues with other ordinary Australians to find that there are no jobs in a system that is unable to cater not only to them but to many others who are not in the top few per cent in the country. The government are also engaging in a very serious process of deception by continually attacking and scapegoating rorters in the system. By doing this, what they are attempting to do is paint a picture that all job seekers are the same. That is wrong. The reality is very different. The government have had six years to deal with fraud and rorting of the system. It is true that there are some rorters, and perhaps there will always be some rorters. They deserve no special treatment or sympathy and should be weeded out of the system. But for the vast majority of those in the system, this is just not the case. They are genuine job seekers who want a fair go from a government that gives them no hope and leaves them to the devices of the market system. Rorters and fraud make up less than one per cent of the total welfare recipients, and that has stayed static for many years.

There are the disproportionate attacks by Minister Abbott, the big ‘A’; Minister
Brough, the big ‘B’; and the Treasurer, the Big. See what is wrong with this crew—they are the big ABC of this place. There is a real lack of compassion, a lack of judgment, and a lack of empathy. The infamous three, the big ABC—and we all know what the A, B and C do not stand for in this place—want to privatise everything not bolted down and are driven by a desire not to provide services through their portfolios. But what they want to do—and what they do every day—is use that vehicle to attack workers, the unemployed, the frail and the disabled, and of course there is the tireless rhetoric we hear in this place about unions and the Labor Party.

Just today alone, the big ‘A’, Minister Abbott, mentioned the word ‘unions’ 15 times in an answer to a question which had nothing to do with unions. To give people listening a better idea of what I mean, let me go to the media release by Minister—the big ‘B’—Brough. The party of three, the guilty party—

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Jenkins)**—Order! The member for Oxley will refer to members by their proper titles.

**Mr RIPOLL**—In his media release—and this is it here—he spends over 50 per cent of the media release, not discussing jobs and job opportunities or the system itself, but actually discussing the shadow minister for family community services, Wayne Swan. He is more obsessed by that than what he should be obsessed about—that is, helping job seekers. This is what the big ABC are all about. They are more obsessed about people on this side, the unions and the Labor Party, than they are about giving people real job opportunities and, real training and spending money where it should be spent, and that is on people who are looking for work.

Let me touch on one of the biggest deficiencies in the system. It goes to the heart of the failure of the system, and that is the use of ‘parking’ of the unemployed as a means to an end rather than as an outcome. ‘Parking’ refers to people that are on intensive assistance that do not quite fit into the government’s plans. Job Network providers get paid about $9,000 to help disadvantaged job seekers find work. But they do not get it all in one go—and this is the significant part—because there is a part payment of $2,144 for being referred in the first place to a Job Network agency. That is not bad money for doing nothing at all or nothing as yet. If the JNA place a person for 13 weeks of work, then they get a further part payment of $4,953. If the job seeker stays in that job for 26 weeks, then the Job Network agency get the final payment of $2,144. That is pretty good money all round, especially if you have to do very little for those who need intensive assistance and job seekers who are at the easier end of the scale in terms of placing them into work.

The problems come at some point when the real intensive assistance is needed. Job seekers need to be encouraged, supported and perhaps even financially assisted with transport, resumes and so on. But this is not what we see. Instead, we see taxpayers’ money being spent on very glossy brochures promoting golf clubs to HR managers who already have a set. I know that the big ‘B’ has a set of golf clubs himself, but what I want to know is whether he has the balls to match.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER**—Order! The honourable member will withdraw that remark.

**Mr RIPOLL**—Mr Deputy Speaker, I am referring to the balls as in golf balls—the balls to match the golf clubs.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER**—Order! The honourable member will withdraw the remark.

**Mr RIPOLL**—I withdraw the remark if the inference is believed to be something apart from what was meant. This still goes right to the point that this government is encouraging sets of golf clubs for HR managers. Flat screen TVs and DVD players are somehow more important than spending some money on job seekers—maybe a bit of transport money, maybe a pair of work boots with steel caps so that when they go for the job interview they can say they have the right equipment. This is where the time, the money and the emphasis is. This is where the parking is, and the cruisers are on the other side of the House. The cruisers are sitting there now laughing because they know this is
true, and they would not mind a slice of this action. A new set of golf clubs would look good in most of the Liberal Party offices.

So of course it is much easier for a lot of the Job Network agencies who have worked out this loophole—and there are many loopholes in the system—to just take that initial payment of $2,122 on reference and do nothing more. It is great money for doing nothing, except maybe putting people through a couple of contact sessions, and it is a hell of a lot more than what they would have to do if they were a job matcher and get only a miserable $300. As I said, it is a pretty lucrative game all round if you can get into it.

This is where some of the problems arise. Some agencies and private consultancies are excluded from the system. They often do the work and then one of the Job Network agencies actually picks up the big dollars. Imagine that the parking they refer to relates to a real car park and people are the cars. The Abbott, Brough, Costello—the big ABC—solution is to allow the parking of people, a sort of park, set and forget mechanism where the government is no longer responsible—just like a real car park where the sign in big letters says: ‘Park at your own risk.’

This imaginary car park, dreamed up by the big three, ABC, is full of a variety of cars, mostly 1976 Datsun 180Bs, a few mid-eighties Commodores and the odd nineties model, compared with the row of new white Commonwealth cars driving by with ministers A, B and C pointing their fingers at the condition of roadworthiness and asking whether they are all cruisers, as defined by the government. This is how the government wants it. It wants to play the game of finger pointing and blame the job seekers. The government is now going through its third round of most recent changes, which reflect the failed system within its Job Network agency and the Job Network itself. It is a shame that there is not a more real and genuine approach that the government could take to assist job seekers. The government should be condemned for its failure in terms of jobs.

(Time expired)

Mr HARTSUYKER (Cowper) (4.56 p.m.)—I would like to thank the member for Kingston for raising this issue as a matter of public importance. I think the government can point to a third record in the field of job creation—a very proud record indeed. The members opposite must be feeling shame when they consider their own failures in this area of job creation when they were in government. In fact, I look across at the seats opposite and all I see is the black hole of policy development. I think the enduring quality of a black hole is that it is incredibly dense and nothing much comes out of it. It is a terrible thing.

The members opposite boast that among their most prominent ministers for unemployment are none other than the member for Brand and the member for Hotham, so they are well heeled in this regard. The focus of this government is built around creating opportunities, empowering people to improve their employment prospects and their economic and social wellbeing. Labor dogma says, ‘We must instigate policies that just drag people down and not build people up.’ What the government is about is positive policies to get people jobs.

The members opposite cannot think beyond welfare, but this government offers opportunities and a better way of life. Labor left this country with record foreign debt out of control, high interest rates and high unemployment. Unemployment rates were, in fact, amongst the highest since the Depression. It must have been painful for the members opposite to listen to the chronicle of Labor failings, as presented by the Minister for Employment Services earlier. When the government took over, we had 8.2 per cent unemployment and, as the good minister has dutifully pointed out, that has since fallen to 6.3 per cent. Under the old Labor regime, we had dole queues of over a million people. I guess it is no wonder we had dole queues of over a million people because, under Labor, small business—the engine room of growth in the economy and the engine room of employment creation—was paying interest rates of over 20 per cent. So I do not know how anybody is able to create employment when they are paying interest rates of over 20 per cent.
This government has created almost a million new jobs and that is almost equivalent to the total population of Adelaide. I think that is a really great achievement. These are real jobs; these are not mickey mouse jobs. These are not jobs painting pine log fences and painting rocks white—these are real jobs with real prospects. As a result of good economic management and as a result of good effective workplace relations policy, this government has created that. I will repeat again, just so they do not forget over there: almost one million new jobs. Whilst the members opposite might not like it and might not want to hear it, not only have the number of unemployed fallen but also the number of long-term unemployed and the number of very long-term unemployed have fallen, so we are actually speaking with action.

This government is not about to rest on its laurels, either; it is continuing to work towards further improvements with regard to employment, particularly in relation to disadvantaged job seekers. Under the highly successful Australians Working Together program, the government has announced an excellent new assistance initiative to aid job seekers. The measures are numerous. I would like to list them for members opposite. I see that they have all gone, because they do not like to hear this.

Mrs Hull—They do not like to hear the truth.

Mr HARTSUYKER—They do not want to hear the truth. I would like to list a few of the initiatives. Some of these initiatives are: $324 million to help people to find jobs, including 30,000 extra job search training places, at a cost of $19 million; 16,500 extra Work for the Dole places, at a cost of $43 million; and 60,000 Passports to Employment. Members opposite provided a lifetime sentence of unemployment but we are providing 60,000 Passports to Employment—resumes, references and job seeker skills updates, at a cost of $16 million.

There are new training credits of up to $800 for 64,500 Work for the Dole and community work participants, and training accounts for 69,000 mature age and indigenous job seekers in job search training and intensive assistance—a total of $111 million worth of initiatives. There are 40,000 improved intensive assistance assessments, at a cost of $23 million; 3,600 extra literacy and numeracy training places; and 42,000 ongoing assessments of personal support program participants in intensive assistance. There is $251 million to help parents to return to work, including the new Transition to Work program; Centrelink personal advisers; new career counselling, literacy and numeracy and vocational education and training places; disability employment assistance services; and community work placements. There is a capital injection of $11 million for Centrelink and $16 million more for child care, including outside school hours places for 5,300 more children each year. The list goes on—I will continue the pain!

Mr John Cobb—It is staggering!

Mr HARTSUYKER—It is very staggering indeed. There is $146 million to deliver a fairer go for mature age workers, new disability employment assistance services, rehabilitation places and new career counselling, literacy and numeracy and vocational education and training places. There is $177 million for a better deal for people with disabilities, including 7,000 new disability employment assistance places. The list is so long! The things we are doing to help the unemployed! There are 5,200 new places in vocational education and training.

Mrs Hull—that is very good too.

Mr HARTSUYKER—that is a very good program indeed. There is $83 million for more practical ways to promote self-reliance for indigenous people, including indigenous employment centres for up to 10,000 indigenous people, at a cost of $31 million. There are community participation agreements and capacity building in remote communities; 12 Centrelink remote area servicing centres; and increased education and training assistance for 1,600 indigenous secondary school students and 2,300 indigenous students in vocational education and training. There is $143 million in getting people the right help at the right time, including a new personal support program and better assessments for indigenous job seekers, activity test exempt job seekers and peo-
ple recently released from prison. We are certainly concentrating on the people in need.

You can see from those initiatives that this government is clearly focused on meeting the needs of disadvantaged job seekers and providing the type of assistance they need to get back into the work force. The government has introduced programs for job seekers which are customer focused, will provide a personalised service that will improve prospects for job seekers, and will address the barriers in the labour market for disadvantaged job seekers who need real assistance.

I should expand on what I mentioned earlier about the job seeker account: disadvantaged job seekers will have access to the job seeker account for Job Network members. The job seeker account operates as a pool of funds that Job Network members can draw on to assist disadvantaged job seekers with services such as training, wage assistance and personal development. Importantly, those funds will be quarantined for use for those purposes only—no flat screen TVs in any of that money! It is important that the funds are quarantined because it will ensure that appropriate assistance is delivered to people who are disadvantaged. Once again we are focusing on the disadvantaged job seekers and on the people who are most in need.

It is clear to all except members opposite that this government is indeed highly focused on disadvantaged job seekers and on creating real opportunities to get real jobs. I represent the electorate of Cowper, which is in regional and rural Australia. We are focused on meeting the needs out in the bush. Changes to the Job Network outlined in the budget will assist regional and rural Australia through access to more vacancies through an expanded network of job placement providers and more online vacancies. The fleet of touch screen units which will allow job seekers to access the Australian job search national vacancy database will be extended, and the total number of touch screens will be increased from 760 to 1,000, of which 400 will be located in regional and rural localities.

In conclusion, I must say that the government has not failed in its responsibility to disadvantaged job seekers—quite the contrary. This government has dramatically reduced the rate of unemployment and put in place the policies that will give disadvantaged job seekers improved prospects of gaining employment. Labor should be ashamed of their performance with regard to employment opportunities when they were in government. This government can rightly be proud of its very fine record and its success in helping the unemployed, particularly unemployed people who are most in need.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. I.R. Causley)—Order! The discussion has concluded.

COMMITTEES
Members’ Interests
Report
Mr HAASE (Kalgoorlie) (5.05 p.m.)—In accordance with standing order 329, on behalf of the Committee of Members’ Interests, I present the report on the operations of the committee for 2001, together with the minutes of proceedings.

Ordered that the report be printed.

BANKRUPTCY LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2002
Report from Main Committee
Bill returned from Main Committee without amendment; certified copy of the bill presented.

Ordered that this bill be considered forthwith.

Bill agreed to.

Third Reading
Ms WORTH (Adelaide—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Health and Ageing) (5.06 p.m.)—by leave—I move:
That this bill be now read a third time.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a third time.
BANKRUPTCY (ESTATE CHARGES) AMENDMENT BILL 2002

Report from Main Committee

Bill returned from Main Committee without amendment; certified copy of the bill presented.

Ordered that this bill be considered forthwith.

Bill agreed to.

Third Reading

Ms WORTH (Adelaide—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Health and Ageing) (5.07 p.m.)—by leave—I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

CUSTOMS TARIFF AMENDMENT BILL (No. 1) 2002

Report from Main Committee

Bill returned from Main Committee without amendment; certified copy of the bill presented.

Ordered that this bill be considered forthwith.

Bill agreed to.

Third Reading

Ms WORTH (Adelaide—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Health and Ageing) (5.08 p.m.)—by leave—I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

FAMILY AND COMMUNITY SERVICES LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (DISABILITY REFORM) BILL 2002

Second Reading

Debate resumed.

Mr ANTHONY (Richmond—Minister for Children and Youth Affairs) (5.08 p.m.)—With regard to the Family and Community Services Legislation Amendment (Disability Reform) Bill 2002 the government is serious about improving outcomes for people with disabilities and this budget delivers on this commitment. A lifetime on income support is not the best outcome for a person who can play an active role in society. Many people with disabilities want to work and to earn real wages. The changes made to the qualification criteria for disability support pensions by schedule 1 of this bill will ensure that people with disabilities are actively encouraged to take up part-time jobs or other activities consistent with their capacities. This will facilitate the transition from welfare to work. It is about providing people with a disability with the support and skills they need to re-enter the work force. This is not a crackdown on DSP recipients or a cost cutting exercise.

People with a disability who are not able to work without support for 15 hours a week at award wages will still be eligible for DSP. There will be no changes to the current arrangements for permanently blind disabled support pensioners. Disability support pension recipients who are within five years of age pension age will not be reviewed as part of these changes, nor will veterans receiving special or intermediate rate DVA disability pensions, nor people with severe disabilities who clearly have no capacity to work, such as those in a coma or who are terminally ill or those in a nursing home.

People who are not able to work for full award wages will not be affected by the changes. This means that people working in business services, for example in sheltered workshops, for less than full award wages will continue to qualify for DSP. People who could not work independently, such as those with high personal care needs, will also continue to qualify for DSP. The rate of DSP will not be cut as a result of these changes. These changes mean that people who currently receive DSP and some people who apply for DSP in the future may no longer be eligible for the payment. These people will need to apply for another payment such as Newstart allowance. These people will have a greater access to services and assistance to support them in gaining skills and realising their worker capacity.

The McClure report recommended that the government realign the 30-hour work capacity threshold test with current working patterns. This measure takes that step. The new 15-hour work capacity threshold reflects
the trend towards part-time and casual positions in the labour market. Part-time or casual employment can improve a person’s financial position and can lead to more suitable employment opportunities in the future. In many cases, people with disabilities who have skills to offer, but who could not work full time, could undertake this kind of work. This measure also ensures that, in assessing whether a person has continuing ability to work, Centrelink takes into account the range of services and assistance that is available to assist a person with a disability in realising and developing their skills and work capacity.

In addition, the measure removes the relevance of a person’s place of residence in determining whether the person has a continuing inability to work. This aspect of the measure recognises that a person should not be granted DSP based on their age or where they live, but rather on their capacity to undertake work. This measure represents a real investment in people with disabilities.

Increased assistance funded as part of this package will help people with disabilities to improve their competitiveness in the labour market. The government will spend $258 million over three years on additional employment assistance, rehabilitation, pre-vocational assistance, education and training to help people with disabilities to find employment. The government will use the rest of the savings from these measures to contribute to a range of disability services as part of the third Commonwealth, states and territories disability agreement. This unparalleled growth in Commonwealth assistance for people with disabilities. People will also have access to financial assistance to help with the cost of participation through payments such as mobility allowance; the language, literacy and numeracy supplement; the Work for the Dole supplement; and employment and education entry payments. These changes are about improving the work capacity of people with disabilities and assisting them to participate to their full potential.

The changes made by schedules 2 and 3 reinforce the Australians Working Together message that all people of work force age should be prepared to participate at a level appropriate to their capacity. At present, the person can be completely exempt from the activity test for the purposes of Newstart allowance or youth allowance if the person is incapacitated for work of at least eight hours per week, regardless of whether they can undertake another activity. Under these changes, a person will no longer be exempt from the activity test where the person is capable of undertaking a suitable activity. These changes will allow personal advisers to interview customers to assess their capacity, taking into account such matters as the person’s education, experience, needs, skills and age as well as their medical condition. Examples of activities that customers may be able to take part in are existing programs such as rehabilitation, personal support programs and some employment services. For other customers, it may be that taking part in an education or training course or accessing self-help facilities via the Internet will be appropriate. This measure, like the measures in schedule 1 of this bill, shifts the focus to a person’s capacity rather than their incapacity or disability, to what they can do rather than what they cannot.

In conclusion, I thank all of those speakers who have participated in the debate. The contribution and commitment by the member for Dunkley I thought were very good. I also thank the loyal officers in the Department of Family and Community Services and others who have participated in the previous bill and in this bill.

Question put:
That the words proposed to omitted (Mr Swan’s amendment) stand part of the question.

AYES

Anderson, J.D. Anthony, L.J. Baird, B.G. Barresi, P.A. Billson, B.F.
Bill read a second time.

Third Reading

Mr Anthony (Richmond—Minister for Children and Youth Affairs) (5.26 p.m.)—by leave—I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr Anthony (Richmond—Minister for Children and Youth Affairs) (5.27 p.m.)—I move:

That the House do now adjourn.

Watson Electorate: Centenary of Federation Project

Mr Leo McLeay (Watson) (5.27 p.m.)—This evening I want to inform the House about a Centenary of Federation project in my electorate—a project which led to the publication of a book entitled Canterbury’s Boys: World War I and Sydney’s Suburban Fringe, which I had the honour of launching at Campsie Central Library on 22 April.

Between August 1914 and November 1918, over 1,900 men and five women from the Canterbury district volunteered for service in World War I. These are the people recognised in the project which, in addition to being supported by the Centenary of Federation Fund, was also supported by the Canterbury and District Historical Society and, in particular, the Canterbury City Council. For the past 12 years, members of the historical society have been collecting names and
photographs from a variety of sources and writing biographies. The book has a roll of honour of 350 men who died on active service, descriptions with photographs, maps of the battles in which Canterbury men were involved and other information about Canterbury during World War I.

The statistics are worth noting. Around 11 per cent of Canterbury’s population volunteered for service in World War I. Their ages ranged from 14 to 51 years of age. On the whole, the men were younger than the national average—22 per cent of them, over one-fifth, were under 20 years of age. Four per cent were under the eligible age of 18 and 10 were boys of only 15 years of age. The proportion of married men—28 per cent—was higher than the national average of 18 per cent. On a number of occasions I have visited Australian war memorials in Villers-Bretonneux and in other parts of Europe, and the thing that amazed and touched me the most in visiting those cemeteries was the incredibly young age of the people buried there. Note that from Canterbury in my electorate, 10 of the people who went to that war were only 15 years of age.

Just over three-quarters of all the people who went from Canterbury enlisted before August 1916. Fourteen sailed on 19 August 1914—only 15 days after war was declared—and they went with the Australian Naval and Military Expeditionary Force to take over the German colonies of Rabaul and German New Guinea. Just under a quarter of the men from Canterbury served at Gallipoli, the majority in the infantry. Only four per cent served in the light horse; after Gallipoli, they continued the fight against the Turks in Palestine and the Middle East. Most of the infantry served on the Western Front in France and Belgium. Nineteen of them joined the Australian Flying Corps, and some joined the Royal Australian Navy. There were three doctors, three nurses and one masseuse. So, as you can see, Canterbury was represented in every possible way.

Canterbury in 1914 was a rapidly developing suburban area on the then outskirts of Sydney. Campsie was the most densely populated suburb, and many houses were under construction in Hurlstone Park, Wattle Hill, Belmore, Lakemba and Undercliffe. The more remote parts of the municipality to the west and the south were still semi-rural.

The Australian Red Cross was formed on 11 August 1914, and within days local branches sprang up, including in Campsie. Many other local groups worked to make life a little easier for the troops, for overseas relief and later for returning wounded soldiers and widows of deceased soldiers. German-sounding street names were unfortunately changed and new streets were given patriotic names.

The railway goods line to Enfield was under construction during the first part of the war. At the end of 1916, a special draft of railway workers was raised to build and operate supply railways on the Western Front, and many fitters, train drivers and firemen from Belmore, Lakemba, Campsie and Enfield were among those who enlisted for that enterprise.

The Canterbury district voted against conscription in the October 1916 referendum, and conscription was rejected nationwide. In a second referendum in 1917, it was again rejected.

After the war, rolls of honour were erected in churches, schools and halls, and war memorials were constructed to honour those who had served. Groups of ex-servicemen were formed throughout the district. Canterbury municipality became a major locality for the construction of war service homes for returned servicemen. The first war service home built in Australia was constructed at 32 Kennedy Avenue, Belmore. It has been extensively altered since then, but intact homes can still be found in estates in Belfield, Earlwood and Belmore.

I would like to acknowledge the fact that my colleague the member for Banks also supported this project. I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate the members of the Canterbury and District Historical Society for their research on this project. In particular, I would like to thank the editor, Lesley Muir, Leslie Hall and Brian Madden for their work. (Time expired)
Parkes Electorate: Broken Hill

Mr JOHN COBB (Parkes) (5.32 p.m.)—I would like to draw the attention of the House to the fact that this Friday the Pasminco mine in Broken Hill, which is probably the most historical mining city in Australia, will close. In a sense, the closure brings to an end 118 years of mining. While it is obviously bad in one sense, it is a very big day for Broken Hill—not just because Pasminco is putting on a very big party for all the staff and contractors who work at the Pasminco mine. While only 600 people—I stress ‘only’—are involved with the mine now, in its time many thousands of people worked at the mine. Why it is a big day is because Pasminco will be paying out all entitlements owed to everybody working at the mine. It is even employing counsellors to assist people who work at the mine and need counselling services and services to find other jobs. That will be done and Pasminco will be paying for it.

It is also a very big time in the sense that a month later Perilya are buying this mine. While for one month nothing will be happening at the mine apart from maintenance, one month down the track Perilya, the new owner and an Australian company, will be hiring again. While the total number of staff employed at the mine will go down from 600 to 400, the very good news is that the life of the mine will be extended from about four years to about 10 years. Also, Perilya are going to mine every lode, every part that has not been explored over the past 118 years, so it is possible that the 10 years could be extended beyond that.

The reason that it is a very big time for Broken Hill is not just that all those people are receiving their entitlements—although, obviously, that money will be a boost to the economy of Broken Hill—but also that Perilya have done a deal with Korea Zinc which involves supplying them with 100,000 tonnes of zinc per year. Obviously, that is a great basis for anybody to be taking over a business. What is very different about this is that operations will cease—and I think I am right in saying that it will be for the first time in Broken Hill’s history—and a whole new mining system will go into operation. As I said, for a month it will be a maintenance-only basis and then Perilya will be hiring. Obviously they will be looking to hire people with experience, and hopefully most or a very great number of the people from the Pasminco operation who are not retiring will be hired.

That is not the only major occurrence happening in the life of Broken Hill. At Pooncarie, not far to the south of Broken Hill, there is a very big chance that a mineral sands mining exploration venture will be going ahead. When it does, it looks as though the processing will take place in Broken Hill. For a city for which not long ago people were predicting doom, we have quite a lot going on. Marketing for tourism, backed by the federal government in a commitment before the election, is going ahead. The Honeymoon mine, just across the border in South Australia, contributes much and will contribute more to the Broken Hill economy. It is rather wonderful that a city people were predicting the demise of is as resilient and tough as it is and has the people in it that it does.

I obviously am very proud to have a city like Broken Hill in my electorate. I wish that I could be in Broken Hill on Friday night, because it will certainly be a very big night in the history of that city. The fact that everybody’s entitlements will be paid out and that Perilya in a month’s time will be hiring people—somewhat fewer people, but the life of the mine will be extended from four to 10 years—is a very great thing. (Time expired)

Reconciliation Week

Newcastle Electorate: Unemployment

Ms GRIERSON (Newcastle) (5.37 p.m.)—In rising, I would note that I am proud to be wearing a Walk the Talk badge for National Reconciliation Week, but as a new member I would also like to express on the record my disappointment and dismay that Reconciliation Week was given scant attention in the House. I urge the government to begin to walk the talk as well.

But in rising today I also want to draw further attention to the inequities that are promoted by this government with unemployment. The unemployment rates for regional Australia remain unacceptably high.
In my electorate of Newcastle there are 22,100 people seeking employment, and they are of course those registered for unemployment. The labour force figures for April 2002 show that we are again experiencing 9.8 per cent unemployment. Economic growth may be increasing, as the Treasurer will claim, and the unemployment rate nationally may be decreasing but in regional Australia the policies are not working. The policies are not working because they are really not in place at all.

In April this year the Productivity Commission held a public hearing in Newcastle as part of their independent review of the Job Network. At that hearing many personal accounts were given of the impact of long-term unemployment. The people who gave them ranged from women trying to re-enter the work force after periods of child raising to mature-age people who had previously worked all their lives now finding that they are experiencing continuing long-term unemployment. One of the people contributing had worked since the age of 14 years and was not eligible to be placed on the Job Network system because of his wife’s employment status. For such men working is certainly a way of life, one that they know, they value and they want to continue. At that commission hearing the Samaritans, a group who had been participating in the Job Network, presented information that they would be withdrawing from that system. They were finding it absolutely unacceptable that they were trying to provide work for people but were being encouraged to breach them for any failures and then, in their role as a charity, supporting them with welfare payments, support and assistance. The commission’s report will be looked at very closely by the people of Newcastle, where we experience an unacceptably continuing high a rate of unemployment. It must be a source of embarrassment to the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs that in his electorate he has the highest unemployment rate in New South Wales.

Unfortunately the budget was of no comfort for the people of Newcastle: there was no funding for infrastructure. We in Newcastle have been asking for a long time for some infrastructure programs that will support economic growth and job creation. They include a football stadium. That has been submitted to this House through the budget process, and we have seen no funds. We expected some funds for some road and transport infrastructure in the seat of Paterson, which would perhaps have given some spin-offs to Newcastle. They also did not appear.

I recently launched an art exhibition, the culmination of the work of people on long-term unemployment programs: on-the-job assistance and intensive assistance programs that trained them in the area of tourism and heritage. Unfortunately there was nothing in the budget that would support tourism or heritage projects in Newcastle. We have a medical research centre asking for funding that would provide construction jobs and more support for their industry, but we saw nothing in our budget. In Newcastle health and education are the largest employers, so we were particularly disappointed to see that again there were no improvements in those areas.

We do note that there are some improvements in the Work for the Dole program, but in Newcastle that means that only eight people out of every 100 that participate in the Work for the Dole program will in fact receive a job. If we were looking at government performance, including the performance of departments, we would not find that statistic acceptable: eight out of 100 receiving jobs is not a program that is delivering for Australia. We also found in the budget that funding for disability support payments is now under threat. Newcastle has the second highest take-up of disability support payments in Australia. I call on the government to start funding local projects in regional Australia, projects that provide jobs for long-term unemployed people, young people seeking their first job and those entering the work force after periods of child raising.

Road Safety Education

Mr FARMER (Macarthur) (5.42 p.m.)—Today I would like to bring to the attention of this House an issue that is very close to my heart. It is an issue which has touched my family personally, one which I believe needs to be addressed in the interests of all
to be addressed in the interests of all Australians. Each year hundreds of young people die in accidents on Australian roads. The saddest part of this whole situation is that most of the time these accidents can be prevented because in many cases speed and inexperience are the major factors. I know this too well. Last year one of my cousins was the passenger in a high-powered performance vehicle travelling at a speed of over 160 kilometres an hour. He was two weeks away from his 17th birthday when he was killed in a high-speed accident. Only last weekend I saw once again how youth and inexperience combined with speed can lead to more tragic deaths on the roads in my electorate. This time three young men aged between 14 and 17 were killed in a two-car accident on Silverdale Road.

Over the years many departments of governments across the country have introduced programs, public awareness campaigns and licensing schemes to try to reduce the number of young people killed on our roads. While some of these have been successful, each year young people continue to die needlessly. To me it is not enough for governments to impose road rules on young people and then hope that they follow them. Public awareness can only go so far. To make a difference, I believe that we need to limit the types of vehicles inexperienced drivers have access to.

Although most modern cars are capable of going well over the posted speed limit, I believe that young people are more likely to speed and take risks when driving high-powered performance vehicles. You do not need to have a PhD to know that young people who drive these types of cars show off to their friends. While we can sit here and discuss how sad this behaviour is, it is very hard to stop it when these kids have access to high performance vehicles. When you combine this type of behaviour with inexperience you have a lethal cocktail.

So how do we stop young people from behaving this way? The answer is simple. We educate them and we stop them driving these types of vehicles. There is no reason why young inexperienced drivers need to drive high-powered performance cars while they are learning to drive unsupervised. If we stop young people driving high performance cars they may be less likely to show off to their friends and take risks behind the wheel. I am sure all of us in this House can remember how inexperienced we all were when we first got our drivers licence. It takes years of driving on your own without a teacher in the passenger seat for someone to become a good driver. Young drivers are vulnerable in the first few years behind the wheel and limiting the type of vehicle that they can drive may help reduce the road toll. This is an issue which needs to be investigated. It is one which I will be raising with the parliamentary secretary responsible for road safety. Speed limiters are fitted to trucks and motor lorries and systems can be developed for cars as well. I hope that all of my colleagues on both sides of politics will support me in this action so that young lives may not be lost needlessly.

Car Advertisements

Mr MARTIN FERGUSON (Batman) (5.46 p.m.)—At the outset I would firstly like to compliment the member for Macarthur for raising a very serious issue going to the unfortunate death of too many of our young people on the road. In doing so, I would ask him to support my endeavours to force the government’s hand and make them actually put in place a more constructive and enforceable code of conduct in relation to car manufacturers’ advertising campaigns on Australian television.

As we all know, young people are impressionable. I do not think it is acceptable that this government continues to allow manufacturers to advertise cars on the basis of how fast they can go. The government has now suggested that if they merely confine that advertising to off-road presentations then it is acceptable. So far as I am concerned, speed in advertising with respect to motor vehicles—be it on-road or off-road—is totally unacceptable because young people are impressed by such advertisements. I urge him to actually take these issues up with the Parliamentary Secretary for Road Safety, Senator Boswell, as a matter of urgency. Perhaps where I have failed to get that mes-
sage through to the good senator he might be able to succeed because he sits on the other side of the House.

Having raised those issues, I want to deal with another very important issue this evening. It goes to the energy credits scheme. I will firstly remind the House of the history of the scheme. It arose from a grubby little deal with the Democrats by the Howard government to get the GST through the Senate. The Democrats, in a vain attempt to restore a modicum of credibility after their disastrous marriage of convenience over the GST, required the government to insert sunset provisions into each of those bills. The date of those sunset provisions was 30 June 2002.

We have also seen a great deal of reference to marriages in the last week. We all know, for example, that the Liberal Party has been keen to consummate a marriage with the Nationals. I understand that some Nationals—and perhaps Senator Boswell is an example of that—are receptive to that marriage. I simply want to say they should be cautious. We all know that this marriage will only result in the Nationals being abused and exploited by their so-called partners, the Liberal Party. I contend that the GST deal is an example of that with respect to the diesel fuel grants scheme.

The 30th June 2002 is fast approaching. That is no longer the sunset date. It is now 30 June 2003. Part of that deal requires that the government actually put in place an alternative energy credits scheme, which is exceptionally important in terms of the complex greenhouse debate that exists in Australia and internationally at the moment. I believe that the time has come for the minister for transport to actually take that understanding with the Democrats seriously because I take this view: marriage is a very serious issue and so is the question of—after entering into a deal and shaking hands—honouring your word. Arrangements were entered into in terms of the energy credits scheme and the diesel fuel credits scheme.

The Trebeck report has come and gone, dismissed lightly by the Howard government. The Trebeck report suggested that perhaps we push out the sunset date with respect to the energy credits scheme. So far as I am concerned, that is unacceptable. I am calling on the minister this evening to actually get serious about issuing the Howard government’s proposal with respect to the energy credits scheme and its relationship with the existing diesel fuel grants scheme. 30 June 2003 is not far away. We need to properly consult with all interested parties who depend on the diesel fuel credits scheme and in doing so guarantee that there is a secure environment which assists their industry in the future. We also need to make sure that we face up to our responsibilities on the energy credits scheme and importantly we need to require the Howard government to honour its word with the Democrats, because in essence life is about keeping your word; it is about faith and principle. (Time expired)

Local Government: Funding

Mr HARTSUYKER (Cowper) (5.52 p.m.)—I must say that I am heartened by the concern of the member for Batman for the wellbeing of the National Party and the degree to which he holds dear the institution of marriage. But my address to the House tonight is in relation to the issue of funding for local government. I received today a press release from the Minister for Regional Services, Territories and Local Government, Mr Wilson Tuckey. In that press release he stated that there was to be an inquiry into the financial position of local government in Australia and that the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Economics, Finance and Public Administration inquiry will focus on cost shifting to local government by state governments.

This is an issue of great concern, particularly in regional Australia, where local governments are under very significant financial stress. They provide very important services to people on the ground. They provide the roads, drainage, sewage services—vital services to our community—and members’ representatives or elected representatives from local government are constantly saying to me that they are being starved of funds and that the state Labor governments are shifting the responsibility to provide services from the state government to local government in so many areas. I have certainly discussed this issue at length with a number of
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mayors in my electorate: Gordon Braithwaite, the Mayor of Bellingen Shire; George Hicks, the Mayor of Nambucca Shire; Kerry Lloyd of Pristine Waters Shire Council; and Chris Gulaptis, the Mayor of Maclean Shire Council.

They have all expressed the same sorts of concerns. They have expressed the concern that more and more responsibilities are being landed on local governments in regional Australia, which are burdened with often very large road networks with very small rating bases and very low property values in some cases. So they are being given increased services to provide but the money has not been forthcoming with which to provide those services. It is of great concern.

The Carr Labor government in New South Wales, in particular, is very city-centric. The joke in regional Australia about the government in New South Wales is that NSW stands for Newcastle, Sydney and Wollongong—that most of the services are not being provided out in the region; that a disproportionate share of funding is in fact being dispersed in city areas when the needs are absolutely vital out there in regional Australia.

I have had some significant discussions with these mayors, and another concern that they raise is that much of the money that is being provided to local government is in the way of grants. That means that various local governments have to employ legions of people to make out endless grant applications in pursuit of an ever shrinking amount of money. Then, at the other end, in the state government we have another legion of bureaucrats who are spending an equal amount of time assessing all the grants and handing out the money. So we seem to have a situation where there is an incredible bureaucratic investment in the preparation and the assessment of grants. That money would be better spent, I believe, in providing services on the ground, particularly in electorates such as mine, the electorate of Cowper out there in region Australia, where local government needs are so great. It is interesting to note that Minister Tuckey in his press release says:

Councillors have also faced increased obligations and compliance costs under state legislation. Rate pegging, fee capping and the granting of rate concessions and exemptions to industry are other examples of the problem.

He goes on to note:

The Commonwealth Grants Commission found state assistance to local government has declined in relative importance from 15 per cent of local government revenue in 1974-75 to seven per cent in 1997-98.

So that is a fall of half. By comparison, Commonwealth assistance has remained relatively constant. It has increased slightly—from 10½ per cent in 1974-75 up to 12 per cent in 1997-98.

I think there have been some excellent initiatives by the Commonwealth in relation to funding of local government needs. The Roads to Recovery Program is a great example of a program of federal money providing services on the ground where it is needed in regional Australia. I would like to commend the federal government on their Roads to Recovery initiative. But I would also like to say to the states that they need to be providing much greater funding for local government—much greater untied funding—so that the councils and the local government authorities can provide services without needing to apply for endless grants. They need to have secure income streams. They should not be beholden to a higher authority. They should have security of an income stream. (Time expired)

Brisbane Airport Corporation: Master Plan

Mr Rudd (Griffith) (5.57 p.m.)—Aircraft noise is a problem for many communities across Australia, not the least my own community in the southern suburbs of Brisbane, which it is my privilege to represent in this parliament. Most recently this problem in Brisbane has been accentuated by the approval processes relating to a new master plan for Brisbane airport and its recommendation for the construction of an additional parallel runway. This approval was granted in February 1999 by transport minister Anderson. In 1999-2000, the Senate conducted an inquiry into the approval processes surrounding the Brisbane Airport Corporation master plan and in fact found many deficiencies associated with that approval process.
Based on the findings of the Senate inquiry, from July 2000 on, I initiated my own application in the Administrative Appeals Tribunal against the decision by transport minister Anderson to approve the Brisbane Airport Corporation master plan. Since that time there have been four iterations of this case relating to whether or not proper procedures were applied by the minister in approving the Brisbane Airport Corporation master plan. The Administrative Appeals Tribunal was designed, based on the recommendations of the Kerr committee report in the mid-1970s, to provide an early and expeditious opportunity for administrative review of decisions by the executive government for members of the community affected by the decisions of the executive government. Within the Airports Act, that provision was provided for persons such as me to seek such review.

In the four stages of the cases, the first two—both before the AAT and then subsequently in the Federal Court—involved the federal government and me. They were won by me. As to the second two stages of the court, the first of those was heard in 2001, again in the AAT, on the question of whether in fact I had standing to bring this matter at all. I won that matter. In early 2002, however, on further appeal to the Federal Court by the Brisbane Airport Corporation, it was found that I did not have standing. The court found that I was not a person affected by aircraft noise or by the proposed construction of the parallel runway. Furthermore, the court awarded costs against me and in favour of the corporation. The precedent cited was a recent High Court decision; namely, the Allan matter, handed down in October last year.

This raises fundamental questions for the future of how individual citizens and communities seek remedy for decisions of the executive government. It goes to the question of how the AAT Act is currently structured and how we in the future manage administrative law appeals standing on behalf of individual citizens within communities. It also, in terms of my own community, goes to the question of how we go about framing a proper noise management plan for the residents of the southern suburbs of Brisbane at present.

The SPEAKER—Order! It being 6 p.m., the debate is interrupted.

House adjourned at 6.00 p.m.
The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Jenkins) took the chair at 9.40 a.m.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Immigration: Asylum Seekers

Ms KING (Ballarat) (9.40 a.m.)—I wish to present and speak to a petition from 148 citizens of the electorate of Ballarat who wish the House to know that they believe the government’s current policies towards asylum seekers are unjust and lacking in compassion and humanity. The presentation of this petition gives me the opportunity to highlight the divisive effect of the government’s actions in the course of the election campaign. It also gives me the opportunity to highlight the fact that, despite some assumptions by many of those in the cities, many residents of rural and regional Australia are concerned about the plight of asylum seekers and the government’s lack of compassion towards them.

The 148 people in this petition represent a growing number of regional and rural Australians who are prepared to speak out for asylum seekers. Recently, in Ballarat over 200 people attended the formation meeting of the Ballarat branch of Rural Australians for Refugees. They have been working hard to reverse the damage done by the government’s demonisation of asylum seekers.

One of the effects of the way in which the government behaved during the election campaign was that, in seeking to label anyone who disagreed with them as unAustralian or traitors, the Prime Minister and the minister for immigration undermined one of the basic premises of our democracy. They denied people the right to disagree, to debate, to speak out and to be critical of government.

The impact that this has had at the community level has been quite insidious. I wish to give an example of this. At the Ballarat Begonia Festival, Rural Australians for Refugees were actually blocked by the organisers from carrying a number of signs. The signs basically said things like ‘Freedom’. They were holding keys. They had met with the City of Ballarat prior to going to the begonia festival parade to determine that they would not carry signs which said things like ‘Throw Ruddock Overboard’. They agreed not to do that. But when they went to enter the parade with their keys and with their signs saying ‘Freedom’ and the words of the national anthem, they had those signs forcibly removed from them.

This sort of thing is a direct result of the way in which the Prime Minister behaved during the election campaign. When the Prime Minister of this country gives permission for people to shut down debate by being prepared to label those who disagree with him as unAustralian or traitors, then he undermines the very fabric of this community. I am pleased that my community is beginning to shake off the shackles of political correctness that this Prime Minister has sought to impose on them. This petition is a fine example of democracy being alive and well in my community, and I am very pleased to present this petition to the Main Committee.

The petition read as follows—

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

This petition of certain citizens of Australia draws to the attention of the House that we do not accept the current Australian Federal Government policy of mandatory detention for asylum seekers because it fails to respect the human rights and dignity of those seeking asylum. This abuse of their human rights is compounded by the unacceptable length of time that asylum seekers are forced to wait for resolution of their refugee status. This policy is unjust, lacking compassion and humanity.
Your petitioners therefore request the House to change the Australian Government policy regarding asylum seekers to respect their human right to seek asylum in accordance with the 1951 UN Convention on Refugees to which our country is a signatory.

from 148 citizens.

**Defence: War on Terrorism**

Mr BALDWIN (Paterson) (9.43 a.m.)—On 21 May, I had the honour of representing the Minister for Defence, Robert Hill, and joined Air Commander Australia, Air Vice Marshal John Kindler, in officially welcoming the deployed RAAF personnel back from Diego Garcia. The two FA18 detachments were made up of personnel from No. 77 Squadron, who returned to Australia in February this year, and personnel from No. 3 Squadron, who returned on 21 May.

The men and women who were involved in and supported the FA18 operation should be immensely proud of their contribution to fight the war against terrorism. The Royal Australian Air Force FA18 aircraft and personnel who were returning from deployment as part of Australia’s contribution to the international coalition against terrorism received a very warm welcome home during the ceremony at RAAF Base Williamtown.

Australia as a nation takes great pride in the Air Force personnel who deployed to Diego Garcia to maintain air operations in support of the coalition against terrorism. The two detachments that made up the FA18 deployment distinguished themselves amongst coalition partners and their contribution was highly recognised and regarded.

On behalf of the government, I thank family and friends for making their own commitment to support their loved ones while they were absent on deployment. Family support is vital for the success of missions such as these and I offer my thanks to them for their support, love and understanding. It is also important that we recognise the wider Air Force community who provide all essential support for these deployments.

History will show the commitment of the FA18 elements to the coalition against terrorism was the first combat related deployment of fighter aircraft since the 1960s. The return of the FA18 aircraft completes Australia’s commitment to fighter operations in Diego Garcia. Air Force personnel and air-to-air refuelling aircraft continue to serve in Kyrgyzstan in support of coalition efforts.

Also on 21 May, later that evening in Canberra, RAAF Base Williamtown picked up two of the 2001 Air Force Awards, which recognise personnel in the Royal Australian Air Force for their outstanding service. The No. 26 City of Newcastle Squadron, based at Williamtown, won the Australian Air Force Association trophy for the most proficient Reserve squadron, and the No. 2 Operational Conversion Unit, also at Williamtown, was awarded the RAAF maintenance trophy for the most proficient maintenance unit.

This was tremendous news for RAAF Base Williamtown and truly recognises the personal commitment and dedication to the service throughout 2001. It is also a tribute to local personnel at a time when the Air Force is working on a number of international operations. These recipients have demonstrated a service that goes beyond the high standards set by the Royal Australian Air Force. I am told that the competition for these awards was tough, and I congratulate our local winners on their efforts.

**Greenway Electorate: Marayong House**

Mr MOSSFIELD (Greenway) (9.46 a.m.)—I would like to speak about a very active neighbourhood centre in my electorate: Marayong House. This centre will have to reduce its
services to the local community if the federal government does not agree to pay its share of the wage increases granted by the New South Wales industrial commission last year. Marayong House provides a range of services to the local community, including playgroup, before and after school care, vacation care, youth group, youth holiday programs, two senior citizens groups, a mothers group, craft groups, first aid classes, a Christmas toy drive and counselling services. The out of school hours service is a very valuable one, as many young parents have to work full time to balance the budget—often with long commuting times involved.

It is nothing to have over 45 young men and women participating in the vacation care programs provided by this centre. Marayong House has four full-time staff, eight casual staff and two permanent part-time staff, with a host of other volunteers helping out. Marayong House has been so successful over many years in providing services for the community that it has outgrown its original residence. Marayong House will shortly be moving to Quakers Hill, into a larger specifically designed permanent building that Blacktown Council has built for it.

There is a genuine need in the community for the type of service that Marayong House provides, but there is never enough. The seniors group, for example, has gotten so large that it has had to be split into two groups, and still there are others on a waiting list for another group.

There is a need for families first programs, and Marayong House is seeking funding for that as well. However, the funding mechanism has not changed in almost 20 years. Marayong House still has the same funding model it had two decades ago, with only CPI increases since. Our community has changed enormously since then, and the need for innovative and progressive programs to meet new challenges and the changing expectations of the community require additional funding. This government, by its blatant disregard for the award increases for community workers, seems intent on slashing the services that organisations such as Marayong House provide. It is not just the responsibility of the state government, as the Treasurer would have us believe. There are programs at Marayong House that are federally funded, but the workers are paid under the state award.

I would like to place on record my thanks to Robyn Tarrant and her excellent team at Marayong House. I am sure the new premises will work out just fine, and I look forward to working with the team on behalf of the community for many years to come.

**Farrer Electorate: EnviroMission**

Ms LEY (Farrer) (9.48 a.m.)—I am delighted to be able to address the Main Committee today about an important and exciting project that is going ahead in the far west of my electorate of Farrer. This is the EnviroMission solar tower and it is quite incredible. EnviroMission is a new publicly listed company which, within five years, aims to be one of Australia’s leading producers of clean, green renewable energy. Its aim is to lead the renewable energy market with new energy technologies that do not consume fuel resources or produce greenhouse gas emissions. EnviroMission owns the exclusive licence to German designed solar tower technology in Australia. Its first project will focus on developing this revolutionary technology into the world’s first large-scale solar thermal power station, capable of generating enough electricity to supply 200,000 typical Australian homes.

Solar Mission aims to adapt innovative solar tower technology to Australian conditions and construct the world’s first large-scale solar thermal power station. The monolithic size of our first 200 megawatt power station will capture worldwide attention and attract significant added value through tourism and associated economic benefits to the power station region.
The principle upon which it works is simple: the sun’s radiation is used to heat a large body of air which is then forced, by the laws of physics, to move as a hot wind through large turbines to generate electricity. A solar thermal power station will create the conditions to cause hot wind to flow continuously through the turbines and generate electricity.

This government is committed to green energy generation and the growth of the green energy market. The electricity sector is a significant contributor to the production of greenhouse gases, but we have set targets through legislation for defined quantities of electricity supply to come from clean, green renewable resources by 2010. At the moment, less than 10 per cent of all electricity generated in Australia comes from these alternative sources. EnviroMission says that the solar thermal power station will prevent over 900,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide from entering the environment annually. This project, and others like it, are much needed. And it has multiple benefits. Salinity mitigation is one: saline water for solar ponds can be sourced from local ground water extractions and can lead to salt harvesting.

It is fantastic that the site chosen for the solar power station is the Wentworth shire, close to Buronga, just over the river from Mildura. This is a community that maximises opportunity and cheerfully overcomes any barriers and difficulties that it faces. I know it will welcome the people, the project managers and all the activity associated with construction of the tower. And what a landmark! Reaching one kilometre high in the sky—with, I am told, tickets to ride to the top and a hothouse of plant growth underneath, together with the associated salt interception schemes and an opportunity for visitors to understand and experience all this innovative technology—it is a wonderful opportunity. This tower can be an icon not just for New South Wales but for Australia. I look forward to being involved with this development.

**Battle of Crete: Anniversary**

_Mr DANBY (Melbourne Ports) (9.51 a.m.)—_On the weekend, we celebrated the 60th anniversary of the Battle of Crete. I had the honour to represent the Leader of the Opposition at a ceremony held by the Cretan Federation of Australia and New Zealand at St Eustathio’s Greek Orthodox church in my electorate, in South Melbourne. We were honoured with the presence of the leader of the Greek Orthodox community in Melbourne, Bishop Ezekiel; the Ambassador of Greece, His Excellency Mr Fotios-Jean Xydas; the Deputy Commander of the Greek General Staff; and a very large representation from the Cretan Greek community and the Greek community generally, many of whom constitute a substantial proportion of my electorate.

The Battle of Crete was a very important element in the Second World War. The role of the Australian troops in the defence of Crete was crucial. Both the 6th and 7th Divisions, as we well know from our history, were sorely used in Greece and subsequently in Crete. Having just read the third volume of Churchill’s Second World War memoirs, it is perhaps difficult to see how the Allies might have done anything else—and, of course, Crete was lost. But, as the Deputy Commander of the Greek General Staff reminded me, there are 800 Allied graves on Crete and 7,000 German graves. The Battle of Crete saw the breaking of one of the most important elements of Hitler’s blitzkrieg, and that was the use of parachute troops, which were never to be used again. Thousands of Australians were eventually evacuated from Crete. Many Anzac and British troops were captured and killed. The friendship that the Greek community showed Australian troops, both in Greece and on Crete, established the friendship that has existed between our two countries ever since.

It is difficult to imagine modern Australia without the contribution of the Greek community. This 60th anniversary was another chance to celebrate that very close relationship. It was very moving, subsequently, at the Shrine, to see veterans of that campaign, in which Austra-
liam and Greek forces fought together, march together. The old veterans of Crete were sorely abused by the Nazi regime. The people of Greece and Crete had the hardest Second World War of many countries in Europe. That is a very tough thing to say, given what happened there during World War II. The Greek and Cretan communities are owed great tribute for the role that they played in supporting Australians during the Second World War. We remember it and we honour it, and we honour their role during the Second World War.

**Parkes Electorate: Commercial Development**

Mr JOHN COBB (Parkes) (9.55 a.m.)—Mr Deputy Speaker Causley, you often hear, and we do too, about how tough it is in country areas, but I rise today to talk about a real success story in the south of my electorate, in West Wyalong in the Bland shire, where the Pace family, an Australian family, has shown enormous resourcefulness and enormous entrepreneurial get-up-and-go to have recently opened the first stage of what will be the most modern and largest egg-laying facility in the Southern Hemisphere. It will have one million hens and, more to the point, will employ about 100 people locally. At the same time in that electorate, in the Bland shire we have Barrick Gold looking to open up at Lake Cowal a very modern new goldmine. Barrick Gold, I should add, probably have the best reputation internationally for being environmentally conscious and environmentally responsible. Yet we are striking incredible problems with the Greens, who are working through or making use of Aboriginal groups to try to stop the project by saying that this is a burial ground or giving any number of other reasons that it should not go ahead, such as that the bird sanctuaries will be disturbed. Lake Cowal is dry almost all the time and at the moment has no water in it and not a bird within cooee; yet outside Greens are making use of Aboriginal groups, with absolutely no interest except that of trying to prevent a magnificent development going ahead.

The country where Barrick Gold are drilling has been farmed for generations. There is no way that there is a burial ground there, and no Aboriginal was ever concerned about the fact that this land was being farmed. The Land and Environment Court has made various decisions regarding this but, to my knowledge and the Bland council's knowledge, has never been near the area. Thankfully, they have had permission to recommence drilling, and all the plans that they have put forward certainly show that the local area and the locals have nothing to fear. We have two opposite views here. The Pace family brought a magnificent egg operation out to West Wyalong to get away from the green problems in Western Sydney, and yet we have Barrick Gold who cannot get going because of the Greens trying to use the legal courts of this land to prevent them. It is a disgrace that we do not have a more rigorous requirement for people to have to prove their point before they can make use of the Land and Environment Court. *(Time expired)*

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. I.R. Causley)—Order! In accordance with standing order 275A the time for members' statements has concluded.

**BANKRUPTCY LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2002**

Cognate bill:

**BANKRUPTCY (ESTATE CHARGES) AMENDMENT BILL 2002**

**Second Reading**

Debate resumed from 21 March, on motion by Mr Williams:

That this bill be now read a second time.

**Mr McCLELLAND (Barton) (9.58 a.m.)—**We will be moving a second reading amendment which I will describe in the course of this debate on the Bankruptcy Legislation...
Amendment Bill 2002. Essentially, while not declining to give this bill a second reading, we will be making the point that we think the emphasis of the government has been too much towards the big end of town, with little concern for those who are actually struggling under the greater debt burdens that tend to be in society these days and, indeed, tend to have been aggravated as a result of the imposition of the goods and services tax. The first bill, the Bankruptcy Legislation Amendment Bill and, indeed, the Bankruptcy (Estate Charges) Amendment Bill 2002 were introduced into the House on 21 March this year. Previous bills substantially similar to these bills were introduced during the last parliament, and lapsed when the election was called.

In introducing the bills, the Attorney-General stated that bankruptcy had been devised ‘as a shield that might be used, in the last resort, by an impecunious debtor to seek relief from his or her overwhelming debts’. He said:

Over the years, some unscrupulous debtors have learned to use bankruptcy as a sword to defeat the legitimate claims of their creditors.

We have seen, indeed, in recent times some very high profile bankrupts in the case of some barristers, for instance, who have failed to pay their taxation obligations for a number of years and then have avoided those obligations by the means of bankruptcy. We agreed that steps need to be taken to prevent that sort of thing occurring. For that reason we will be supporting the essential thrust of these amendments, but I will express our concerns as we go through the discussion. Towards the end of the speech I will indicate our concern that more steps could have been taken to prevent rorts of the system, of the bankruptcy provisions, by the top end of town, in particular with respect to part X arrangements. We say that that should have really been the focus of this legislative response, as opposed to much of this reform that is aimed at those poorer ends of the economic spectrum, those who are more likely to become bankrupt as a result of consumer debts.

The last major overhaul of bankruptcy was in 1996. The government, shortly after coming into office, introduced legislation that, in turn, was substantially based on Labor’s 1995 bill and incorporated amendments by the Senate recommended by the Senate Legal and Constitutional Legislation Committee in September 1995. This bill that we are debating today does a number of things. It gives the Official Receiver a discretion to reject a debtor’s petition where it appears that, within a reasonable time, the debtor could pay all the debts listed in the debtor’s statement of affairs and that the debtor’s petition is an abuse of the bankruptcy system. It also abolishes early discharge from bankruptcy. It will make it easier for trustees to lodge objections to a person’s discharge from bankruptcy and harder for bankrupts to sustain challenges to objections. It clarifies that a bankruptcy can be annulled by the court, whether or not the bankrupt was insolvent when a debtor’s petition for bankruptcy was accepted. It doubles the current income thresholds for debt agreements to allow and encourage many more debtors to choose this particular alternative to bankruptcy.

Other changes proposed by the bill streamline the operation of the act or are as a consequence of the Insolvency and Trustee Service Australia having become an executive agency. Those changes of a technical nature we support. The 2002 bill drops a measure previously included in the 2001 bill which would have introduced, in relation to most debtors, a mandatory 30-day cooling off period under which the debtor may have withdrawn the petition within 30 days of the official receiver accepting it. That measure in particular was heavily criticised as it would have lengthened the period of harassment that can actually be faced by bankrupts in very vulnerable circumstances from creditors and debt collectors, without showing any appreciable benefit for creditors. So we are pleased to have seen that provision...
removed from the bill. The Bankruptcy (Estate Charges) Amendment Bill 2002 amends the Bankruptcy (Estate Charges) Act 1997. Though the nature of those amendments was outlined by the Attorney-General in his second reading speech, they are essentially technical and facilitative in nature. Labor will support those amendments.

While Labor supports the need for bankruptcy reform, there are a number of aspects which are less than satisfactory which I now wish to touch on. Firstly, we are concerned that the consultation was not as broad as it should have been. Those concerns were expressed during the Senate committee hearing on these bills. In particular, in drawing up the reforms, the government paid little attention to those organisations that most closely represent the interests of those people for whom the bankruptcy legislation exists—that is, low income people.

When somebody comes to the realisation that they cannot meet their debt payments, it may be that they have too many credit cards and they cannot cope with the financial situation in which they find themselves. Indeed, there is often a cycle of using one credit card to pay for another credit card until it just completely blows out of control. One of the first people they see to obtain assistance in consolidating their debts so that they start eating into them is a financial counsellor. These people are literally at the coalface of personal insolvency. Often, by visiting a financial counsellor, it is possible to provide people with assistance to budget their way out of the debt and at other times they can obtain advice regarding the bankruptcy procedures.

We would have thought that, in framing personal insolvency laws, one of the most important groups of people to listen to would have been these financial counsellors, but we note with concern the comments by the Wesley Community Legal Service, for instance, when they expressed the view during the Senate committee hearings that ‘financial counselling organisations were not properly consulted’. They said that ‘proper consultation with interested and relevant community based welfare organisations did not occur but rather lip service was paid to a few select organisations’.

The detailed provisions of the bill, which are targeted more at the low income bankrupts who are in over their heads rather than at the bankrupt barristers who I referred to, reflect the lack of interest in the experience of financial counsellors. As the Wesley Community Legal Service submitted, the bill will disadvantage many of the poor in society and their families while debt collectors stand to gain. We think this is really quite an indictment of the government, which has professed to govern for all Australians but instead has been caught time and again getting stuck into those people who have difficulty in standing up for themselves.

In terms of our concerns regarding certain provisions, the first is in respect of early discharge. The bill proposes to abolish the provisions currently contained in the act which allow early discharge for low income bankrupts. The first point to make is that those who will be affected by this measure will be among the most vulnerable in our society. Therefore, you would think that the government should present compelling evidence as to why it is necessary for the good operation of bankruptcy law in this country that the provisions be abolished. The government has not made a convincing case at all for the abolition of early discharge.

Administrative early discharge provisions were introduced in 1992 in response to concerns that low income earners did not have any real capacity to avail themselves of the existing early discharge provisions that required an application to the Federal Court. At that time only a very small proportion of bankrupts availed themselves of the early discharge provisions because of the costs involved in making an application to the court. In almost all cases where early discharge was sought, the order was in fact granted. In respect of the early discharge
provisions, in his tabled second reading speech on 22 August 1995, then Senator McMullan gave his reasons, and I quote:

Commonly, persons who succeed in obtaining orders for discharge have become bankrupt as a result of failed business activities, and seek early discharge so as to enable them to resume such activities. These are usually also persons who have the capacity to contribute to the estate from income, but do not do so. The proposals in the Bill will restore equity to the operation of the early discharge system, and the eligibility and disqualification criteria are designed to ensure that where a person has become a bankrupt because of commercial culpability, he or she is disqualified from early discharge.

Under the current early discharge provisions, a bankrupt may apply for early discharge after 6 months from the time when he or she files a statement of affairs with the Registrar. It is important to note that there are restrictions on the eligibility criteria for this early discharge: firstly, that there has to be a determination that the bankrupt has no or insufficient divisible property to enable a dividend to be paid to creditors; secondly, that the bankrupt has not disposed of property in a transaction that is void against the trustee; and, thirdly, that the bankrupt earns an income that is less than the actual income threshold amount applicable to him or her at the time the application for early discharge is made—that is, that they are not at a level where income would actually be distributed during the course of the bankruptcy to creditors. Disqualifying criteria are also significant. They include: firstly, that the bankrupt has previously been bankrupt—that is significant; secondly, that the unsecured liabilities of the bankrupt exceed 150 per cent of his or her income in the year prior to the date of bankruptcy; thirdly, that more than 50 per cent of the bankrupt’s unsecured liabilities are attributable to the conduct by the bankrupt of business activities; and, finally, that the bankrupt has given false or misleading information about his or her assets, liabilities or incomes.

Going through those criteria we see that they are quite strict and indeed very much focus on low-income earners and only, importantly, in respect of the first bankruptcy. Early discharge is not available in respect of second and subsequent bankruptcies. There is no evidence that these provisions are being abused. Public hearings by the Senate Legal and Constitutional Committee into the bills were characterised by a complete lack of evidence as to the need for the abolition of the early discharge provisions. Indeed, Mr Donald Costello, the acting adviser to ITSA, provided evidence to the committee on the policies underlying the proposed changes, and summed this up when he said:

There are no statistics which would be available to help make a decision as to whether or not early discharge is an appropriate regime to have. All we can provide is feedback from Credit Union Services Corporation of Australia Ltd, which is a significant lending group representing a substantial number of credit unions, plus persistent correspondence from mainly small business creditors over the years who say that it is too easy for people to walk away from their debts.

We are concerned that the government too readily accepted those broad arguments without a more detailed analysis of the facts. We think that there is a chance that in adopting these measures the government is actually scapegoating those who, as a result of struggling times, become bankrupt rather than looking at the underlying causes of their difficulties. Accordingly, the key feature of the early discharge provisions is that they were designed to deal with the increasing number of consumer bankruptcies which were due more to misfortune than misdeed. Indeed, we see now that the explosion in credit card debt in addition to the burden imposed by high mortgages resulting from the dramatic increase in property values in Australia is imposing tremendous burdens on Australian families. I think statistics show that the level of household debt is now about 119 per cent. That is, people owe about one-fifth more than they are bringing in. That is a significant concern that could face many Australians, particularly if there is a rise in interest rates. Regrettably, it will be inevitable that we will see a
surge in bankruptcies if there is a significant rise. Concern within the community regarding any potential increase in interest rates is very profound.

We say the error of the government’s approach is that instead of recognising that their policies have forced greater financial hardship on individuals and small businesses—in particular we refer to the GST—they are actually targeting these people. The Attorney-General said almost as much when introducing the bill when he said that the provisions were targeted at a new category of bankrupt—consumer debtors with low asset backing who have overextended and then cannot repay their debts. Many believe that bankruptcy in this group is due more to lack of financial responsibility than to misfortune. We believe that is a harsh comment in terms of those who are at the most vulnerable end of the socioeconomic scale. The government, rather than getting stuck into them, should be looking at things such as financial counselling and the burdens of policies imposed on, in particular, families who have very low levels of income.

We do not support these measures. We believe that an appropriate balance, to prevent people from going too easily into bankruptcy but permitting them to try and get their lives in order, is to move an amendment which will allow an application for early discharge to be made after two years. The proposal will create a greater incentive for potential bankrupts to enter into alternative arrangements, such as debt agreements. We believe it more appropriately reflects a balance between the two competing policies.

The second area of concern is the incurring of debts within two years prior to bankruptcy. The bill seeks to amend section 265 subsection 8 of the act, which essentially provides that if a person contracts a debt of an amount of $500 or more without having, at the time of contracting it, ‘reasonable or probable ground or expectation’ of being able to pay the debt then such a person is guilty of an offence which is actually punishable by imprisonment for a period not exceeding one year. We say that to remove that particular threshold is particularly harsh. The government’s argument is that the section enables rorting: people could go on a serial spending spree purchasing a number of smaller items, nonetheless running up a total of more than $500 and therefore equally offending the principles contained in the section. However, we have to realise that we are not talking about corporations here. The government’s other argument is that it brings it into line with the Corporations Law. We are very much talking about individuals, particularly if they have a family. There may be some requirement to pay a bond to get a roof over the head of the family. There may be an illness that confronts the family or someone needing a cap on a tooth or kids needing braces. All these things are essential costs. It is harsh in the extreme to have in the 21st century a provision in the statute books which would enable a person who incurred such as an expense to be jailed.

We therefore propose that a proviso be included in that section whereby a person cannot be prosecuted for incurring a debt in excess of a reasonable or necessary personal or household expense without any reasonable ground of expectation of them being able to pay that debt. So the inclusion of ‘necessary personal or household expense’ picks up those points that I made earlier.

The third area of concern is in respect of the offence of contributing to insolvency by gambling in the two-year period prior to bankruptcy. Certainly we are aware that gambling can cause financial devastation for individuals and families. It is something that the community needs to come to terms with, particularly in terms of the proliferation of poker machines. Effectively, section 271 of the act retrospectively criminalises gambling. The difficulty with that section, however, is that problem gamblers are not aware, and could not be expected to know, that their habit is going to be such that it is going to lead them to financial devastation. In-
deed, it may well be a disincentive to problem gamblers obtaining advice before declaring
bankruptcy in the fear that they could actually face these penalties. Again, imprisonment
could be a penalty arising from a prosecution under this section. There are suggestions that
the fear of imprisonment has actually contributed, in the more distressing cases and in the
overall stress of the predicament, to those who have become insolvent as a result of bank-
ruptcy committing suicide.

So these are things that we have got to come to terms with. We do need a response as a
community to the tremendous problem of gambling that is ever increasing in the community,
but to impose these penalties, including the penalty of imprisonment, is literally ham-fisted,
overdone and not an appropriate comprehensive response to that problem which exists in the
community.

The final provisions go to the issues that I raised in respect of the operation of part X of the
act. These provisions very much apply to those, I think is it fair to say, who are more at the
big end of town—those who have had substantial assets. We are concerned that the proposals
put forward by the government do not address the loopholes referred to in part X of the act,
and indeed we note that there has also been some debate in the media about these provisions
being abused or rorted. Part X provides for three alternatives to bankruptcy: entering into a
deed of assignment, entering into a deed of arrangement or entering into a composition with
creditors. We recognise that these provisions are important because, if properly used, they
often result in debtors receiving more than they would have received if the person simply be-
came a bankrupt. But ITSA itself has recognised that these provisions are generally used by
higher-income earners and people in business who are able to offer their assets or payment
from income to creditors.

Part X has generally been seen as a useful mechanism for bringing debtors and creditors
together to work out arrangements that may result in a more superior outcome for all parties
than the bankruptcy of the debtor. Nevertheless, over the years it has become clear that the
procedure is open to abuse, and some legislative amendments have been proposed. Indeed, in
1987 there was a Law Reform Commission report on these perceived defects. It included four
principal points. The first point was to prevent the use of these provisions where debtors have
given misleading or inadequate information to creditors regarding their actual financial cir-
cumstances. The second point dealt with controlling trustees convening meetings in obscure
places and not giving sufficient notice of meetings. Indeed, I recall there was also an issue
regarding trustees being required to be at arm’s length from the actual debtor.

The third issue is debtors stacking meetings with persons who purport to exercise voting
rights in favour of the debtor. Indeed, there have been some instances in the past where there
was evidence that the debtor had incurred debts to family members for the purpose of those
family members effectively stacking the meeting and voting in the interests of the debtor
rather than other creditors. Finally, there are the concerns about conducting meetings without
an impartial chairman—coming back to someone who may have been, for instance, a profes-
sional adviser to the debtor. These are measures that we think need to be addressed. We have
done quite some work in coming up with amendments that we think will address these provi-
sions and we have put them forward in a constructive spirit and hope the government takes on
board those provisions. Using the expertise of the department may well enable the refinement
of those propositions which we have made. As I have indicated, we will be moving a number
of amendments to address the weaknesses that I have referred to, including those provisions
to part X. 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 condemns the government for introducing bankruptcy reforms which crack down on low income bankrupts while leaving loopholes for the rich to exploit”.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. I.R. Causley)—Is the amendment seconded?
Mr Quick—I second the amendment.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER—The question now is that the words proposed to be omitted stand part of the question.

Mr KING (Wentworth) (10.27 a.m.)—The Australian system of robust independence extends to the business community and it is in this tradition that the legislation before the House is proposed. These reforms were developed after more than two years of consultation with various stakeholders in the personal insolvency field and not just the business community but right across the community. In particular, there was consultation with members of the Bankruptcy Reform Consultative Forum, a peak consultative body established in 1996 by the Attorney-General to facilitate better consultation between the Insolvency and Trustee Service Australia, known as ITSA, and key groups with a stake in the bankruptcy laws. The reforms of the committee included a proposal aimed at preventing people using bankruptcy in a mischievous or improper way and encouraging people who can or should avoid bankruptcy to consider other options. One principal reform in the bill which will achieve this objective is to give the court the power to annul a bankruptcy even if the debtor was insolvent when petitioning.

The issues before the parliament are as follows: the first proposal gives the official receiver a discretion to reject the debtor’s petition which appears to be an abuse of the bankruptcy process; second, it involves the abolition of early discharge provisions; third, it strengthens trustees’ powers to make objections to discharge; fourth, it strengthens the court’s power to annul a bankruptcy; and, finally, it doubles the income threshold for debt agreements. The major reform proposals may be divided into three distinct areas: provisions aimed at making bankruptcy more difficult, those which encourage use of alternatives to bankruptcy, and those which address abuses of the system.

Before I address the actual provisions of the proposed legislation, let me mention a little background in relation to an increase in bankruptcies in recent years and part of the problem that the legislation is addressing. Bankruptcies have increased threefold over the past 10 years, to a level of 23,298 in 1999-2000, compared with only 8,493 in 1989-90. There have been fluctuations in the annual number of bankruptcies over that time, but the majority of those bankruptcies have not necessarily been business related. In the financial year 1999-2000, there were 3,899 business related bankruptcies—approximately 17 per cent of bankruptcies—and 83 per cent were non-business bankruptcies. The proportion of business related bankruptcies has approximately halved in the last 10 years. There were some 800 part IX debt agreements accepted by creditors in 1999, and the use of debt agreements has increased exponentially since they were first introduced in 1996. It is recorded that there were some 47 debt agreements in that year, 369 in 1997 and 480 in 1998. The number of debt agreement proposals has, however, risen sharply in the last year, to around 420 a month, well over double the rate of 2000.

By way of further background, it ought to be noted that, in contrast to bankruptcy and alternatives to bankruptcy, the use of part X arrangements has declined significantly. In 1999, only 453 agreements, assignments and compositions under part X were accepted, compared with approximately 800 a decade ago. This decline cannot be solely attributed to the introduction of alternative part IX agreements, as it began several years prior to 1996.
The Inspector-General in Bankruptcy, Mr Gallagher, recently stated that, while it is no easier to go bankrupt now than it has been for many years, the increase in bankruptcies has had a range of contributive factors, such as excessive borrowing prompted by ready credit availability, perceptions of attainable living standards and a lessening of the stigma of bankruptcy. At any given time, the key cause of non-business bankruptcy identified by bankrupts seems to be unemployment, perhaps followed by discord in the family and excessive use of credit.

The proposals that are currently before the House are contained in two bills, the Bankruptcy Legislation Amendment Bill 2002 and the Bankruptcy (Estate Charges) Amendment Bill 2002. The bills will make a number of significant changes to the law. They address concerns that the system is biased towards the debtor and that debtors are not encouraged to think seriously about the decision to declare themselves bankrupt. The changes address unfairness and anomalies, particularly in relation to the operation of the early discharge arrangements and the lack of effective sanctions on uncooperative bankrupts. Finally, they will streamline the administration.

The objects of the bills are, first, to give official receivers a discretion to reject a debtor’s petition where it appears that, within a reasonable time, the debtor could pay all the debts listed in the statement of affairs and that the petition is an abuse of the system; second, to abolish the early discharge from bankruptcy; third, to strengthen the objection to discharge provisions; fourth, to make clear that a bankruptcy can be annulled by the court if or not the bankrupt was insolvent when a debtor’s petition was accepted; and, finally, to raise by 50 per cent the current income threshold in the manner that I referred to a little while ago.

Other changes are consequential on these measures and streamline the operation of the act or are a consequence of the proposals from ITSA to which I have referred. These include: to allow the inspector-general to inquire into the activities of debt agreement administrators and solicitors who are controlling trustees; to give the court a power in specified circumstances to effect the discharge of a bankrupt despite the failure to meet the formal requirements for filing of a statement of affairs; to make the filing of a debtor’s petition itself to be an act of bankruptcy; to allow the amount of final judgments or final orders obtained by a creditor to be amalgamated for the purpose of meeting the $2,000 threshold for the issue of a notice; to require an official receiver to reject petitions of debtors who do not have the same connection with Australia as is required in relation to creditors’ petitions; and to amend several machinery provisions regarding creditors’ meetings, the details of which it is unnecessary for me to go into.

Also, there are changes: to introduce a streamlined meeting procedure to allow creditors to meet and vote by post and to receive proposals for variations of section 73 compositions and schemes of arrangements by similar means, if there is no objection to the procedure; to require bankrupts to notify trustees of material changes to matters relevant to administration; to provide that a debtor is liable for new debts incurred during his or her cooling-off period, even when bankruptcy follows at the end of that period; to allow the court to deny to those debtors who file frivolous counterclaims, set-offs or cross-demands as defences to a bankruptcy notice the benefit of section 41(7) extensions of time for compliance with the notice; to allow creditors by special resolution to permit a bankrupt to retain sentimental property of a prescribed kind; to require trustees to realise assets in a bankrupt estate within a six-year period after discharge; to alter certain aspects of the contributions scheme provisions to ensure that a bankruptcy cannot be annulled on full payment of debts unless interest on the interest-bearing debts has been paid; to ensure that no person who applies to be registered can be registered.
unless at that time the person has the ability, and not merely the capacity to acquire the ability, satisfactorily to perform the duties of a trustee; to increase the statutory minimum remuneration for registered trustees by 8.4 per cent; to allow administration to be transferred from one trustee to another; to introduce a streamlined procedure to allow variations in terminations of part X deeds of arrangement; to allow the trustee, rather than the court, to consent to a bankrupt travelling overseas; to require the applications for an extension of time for payment of interest charges and realisations charge; to extend part X trustees eligibility for the assistance available under section 305 to trustees in a bankruptcy; and to abolish the direct access to an external tribunal for review of trustees’ decisions by a bankrupt.

Those provisions, as can be seen, are detailed; they are the subject of extensive consultation; and, contrary to the suggestions of the opposition, are the result of a very careful review of the whole legislation. In that regard it should be noted that most of the provisions in these bills were contained in the Bankruptcy Legislation Amendment Bill 2001, which was introduced into the House on 7 June last year. It was ultimately passed by the Senate on 27 September, but lapsed when parliament was prorogued for the 2001 general election. It should be noted that the government has in fact taken into account some of the criticisms that occurred in the Senate, some referred to at that time by the opposition, and has made some adjustments to the original proposals to ensure that there is a thoroughgoing reform which will address the government’s concerns.

I wish to briefly mention the proposals for amendment put forward by the opposition spokesperson. In those, he proposes to condemn the government for introducing reforms which crack down on low income bankrupts while leaving loopholes for the rich to exploit. With the greatest respect, this legislation does not do that at all. Rather, what it does do is address community standards. In particular, it addresses the problem to which I have already made reference—namely, the concern of the community that some persons have been using bankruptcy mischievously or improperly and have encouraged some to use bankruptcy as a way of avoiding their proper tax obligations.

As a member of the profession, I have to say that, regrettably, my colleagues represent a section of the community which indulges in practices that are completely and utterly unacceptable. I say to the parliament, as a member of that profession, that I warmly support these provisions, because the law should not be abused to avoid the proper payment of tax by people who can pay the tax but who choose to use the law so as to avoid doing so. I feel sure that the general public would warmly support these provisions for that reason alone.

I mentioned that the legislation addresses some changes to bills that were considered by the parliament before I was elected to this place. The two major changes in that regard are, firstly, that the proposed 30-day cooling-off period during which a debtor’s petition for bankruptcy could be withdrawn will not now be included. Additional consultation revealed opposition in some parts of the community to the proposal amongst some personal insolvency industry stakeholders and there were doubts that it would prevent many bankruptcies. Secondly, the current proposals will raise the income threshold for debt agreements by 50 per cent, not by 100 per cent as was originally proposed. Again, stakeholders in the industry have supported this change.

I conclude by commenting that the legislation is part of the government’s commitment to reform the bankruptcy system to balance the interests of debtors and creditors, thereby resuming the integrity of the personal insolvency system and improving public confidence in it. The bills will streamline technical and machinery provisions to ensure its efficient operation. Bankruptcy will still be applicable to people in severe financial difficulty who simply need a
fresh start. It does not make it harder for them but it is still available to them. These new measures will encourage people who can and should avoid bankruptcy to consider carefully other options, such as debt agreement, and will make bankruptcy tougher for those bankrupts who do not cooperate with their trustee.

Mr WILLIAMS (Tangney—Attorney-General) (10.42 a.m.)—I thank the two members who have participated in the debate on the Bankruptcy Legislation Amendment Bill 2002 and the Bankruptcy (Estate Charges) Amendment Bill 2002. Bankruptcy is designed to give people in severe financial difficulty relief as a measure of last resort from overwhelming debts. Bankruptcies trebled in the decade until the 1997-98 financial year and they have remained at high levels since then. Almost all of the increase, as the member for Wentworth pointed out, has been in the non-business consumer bankrupt category. Clearly, greater numbers of consumer debtors are choosing bankruptcy as a way of resolving their financial problems.

The government is concerned to ensure as far as possible that these people are properly informed when making such an important decision as entering into bankruptcy. The Bankruptcy Legislation Amendment Bill 2002 and the Bankruptcy (Estate Charges) Amendment Bill 2002 will amend Australia’s bankruptcy laws to address concerns that bankruptcy is too easy and to provide a better balance between the interests of debtors and creditors.

The reforms contained in these bills are designed to encourage people contemplating bankruptcy to consider the seriousness of the step they are about to take and to consider alternatives to bankruptcy. The amendments will also achieve the government’s aim of preventing people using bankruptcy in a mischievous or improper way and encouraging people who can or should avoid bankruptcy to consider other options.

Amendments contained in the Bankruptcy Legislation Amendment Bill will give the Official Receiver a discretion to reject debtors’ petitions that are a blatant abuse of the bankruptcy system when it is clear that the debtor is solvent and has singled out one creditor for nonpayment or where the debtor is a multiple bankrupt. The exercise of this discretion will be subject to external administrative review. The bill will strengthen the trustee’s powers to object to the automatic discharge from bankruptcy of uncooperative bankrupts. The strengthening of the trustee’s objection to discharge powers is directed at the intentional failure by a bankrupt to cooperate with his or her trustee and deliberate attempts by the bankrupt to impede the trustee’s administration of the estate.

The reforms contained in the bill relating to objection to discharge provisions will overcome a deficiency in the present law which can encourage a bankrupt to cooperate with the trustee only at the last moment. That is when a review hearing is imminent. Reforms contained in the bill will also confirm the court’s power to annul a debtor’s petition bankruptcy, even if the debtor was insolvent when petitioning. This measure is directed at high-income earners who have chosen not to pay a particular creditor—for example, the Australian Taxation Office—and then petitioned for bankruptcy to extinguish the debt. The bill makes clear that, in such a situation, the court would be able to annul the bankruptcy as an abuse of process, despite the fact that the debtor technically was insolvent.

The bill proposes to increase by 50 per cent the income threshold for debt agreements to about $46,800 after tax to encourage more people to consider the debt agreement option as an alternative to bankruptcy. The practical utility of debt agreements is restricted at present by the relatively low income threshold which applies. The proposed increase will make the debt agreement alternative available to a much larger group of debtors.
Another major proposal contained in the bill is the repeal of the early discharge provisions. That will address unfairness and anomalies in the early discharge arrangements and concerns that some debtors do not think seriously enough about the decision to declare themselves bankrupt. When early discharge was introduced by Labor in 1992, it was argued that keeping low-income debtors bankrupt for three years served no useful purpose if their bankruptcy was due ‘more to misfortune than misdeed’ or unless it was due to ‘commercially reprehensible behaviour’. However, the qualifying criteria established by Labor have not been an adequate test of whether the bankruptcy indeed arose from ‘misfortune rather than misdeed’. For example, a debtor with sufficient assets to pay a dividend or sufficient income to make a contribution is not, intrinsically, any less deserving of early discharge than a person with neither assets nor sufficient income to attract a contribution liability. At the same time, a bankrupt who has deliberately incurred debts with no capacity to pay them could quite easily qualify for early discharge, yet their conduct may well be described as ‘misdeed’ or ‘commercially reprehensible behaviour’.

The current early discharge provisions are discriminatory in other ways. Where a bankrupt couple has joint debts, the male bankrupt will often get early discharge. The female, who generally has a lower income than the male, may not be eligible for early discharge as she will fail the test requiring that her debts be not more than 150 per cent of her income. Approximately 60 per cent of bankrupts are eligible for early discharge. There is no evidence to suggest that the remaining 40 per cent of bankruptcies were due to misdeed rather than misfortune or to commercially reprehensible behaviour. Early discharge has not worked as intended and, instead, undermines the credibility of the bankruptcy system. The repeal of the early discharge provisions will address unfairness and anomalies in the early discharge arrangements and remove a disincentive for debtors to consider options other than bankruptcy.

Other amendments proposed by the bill will streamline the administration of bankruptcies by trustees and improve the operation of the act. For example, the bill will further streamline meeting procedures, simplify the mechanism for changing trustees and allow the inspector-general to examine the affairs of debt agreement administrators. The Bankruptcy (Estate Charges) Amendment Bill 2002 is the second and smaller bill in the government’s bankruptcy reforms package. The bill closes a loophole by applying the realisations charge to amounts received by solicitors who are controlling trustees and allows the 2001 act to commence by removing the link between that act and the commencement of the Bankruptcy Legislation Amendment Bill 2002.

The reforms proposed by the Bankruptcy Legislation Amendment Bill 2002 and the Bankruptcy (Estate Charges) Amendment Bill 2002 will amend Australia’s bankruptcy laws to address the concerns that bankruptcy is ‘too easy’ and to better balance the interests of debtors and creditors. They will encourage people contemplating bankruptcy to consider alternatives to bankruptcy. By restoring fairness to the system, we will promote confidence in it.

The member for Barton has moved an amendment to the motion for the second reading of the bill. It is hardly surprising that the government does not support that amendment. As Labor is well aware, the bankruptcy reform package does contain several measures to address community concerns about those who use bankruptcy to avoid their taxation liabilities. The main bill is not primarily directed at the issue of abuse of the bankruptcy laws by high-income bankrupts, such as barristers and other professionals, but it addresses it in one significant respect. Section 153B of the Bankruptcy Act 1966 currently permits the court to annul a bankruptcy if the petition ought not to have been either presented or accepted. Item 156 of this bill makes it clear that the court may annul a debtor’s petition bankruptcy, whether or not the
bankrupt was insolvent when the petition was presented. Therefore, on application by a creditor, such as the Australian Taxation Office, the court might annul the bankruptcy of a high income professional who technically is insolvent but who could have chosen to meet unpaid taxation obligations.

More broadly, in March 2001, I and the Assistant Treasurer announced the establishment of a task force to report to ministers on whether any changes were needed to the bankruptcy and taxation laws to ensure that the bankruptcy law cannot be used to avoid tax obligations. The task force included representatives from the Attorney-General’s Department, the Insolvency Trustee Service of Australia, the Australian Taxation Office and Treasury. It consulted with the Australian Federal Police and the Director of Public Prosecutions, and has reported on the best way to address community concerns about such bankruptcy. We expect a government response to that report shortly.

The member for Barton expressed concern that consultation in relation to the bills was not as broad as it could have been, particularly with regard to low-income people and credit counsellors. The member for Barton can be informed that the reforms proposed in the bills were developed following more than two years of consultation with various stakeholders in the personal insolvency field. In particular, there has been consultation with members of the Bankruptcy Consultative Forum, a peak consultative body that I established in 1996 to facilitate better consultation between ITSA and key groups with a stake in the bankruptcy laws. One member of the forum is the Australian Financial Counsellors and also a credit reference agency. This agency represents precisely the financial counselling organisations which the member for Barton claims were not consulted. In addition, the proposals contained in the reform package have received wide community support, including from the Law Council of Australia and Credit Union Services Corporation Australia Ltd, the peak industry body for Australian credit unions.

The government also welcomes the report of the Senate Legal and Constitutional Legislation Committee on the bills. The committee recognised that the proposed amendments will achieve the government’s aim of preventing people using bankruptcy in a mischievous or improper way and of encouraging people who can or should avoid bankruptcy to consider other options. I thank the committee and its secretariat for its work in examining the bills. I am pleased that the committee recommended that the bills be passed, although I note that Labor senators opposed the proposed abolition of early discharge from bankruptcy—that is, for eligible bankrupts’ discharge after six months. As Labor members appear to be in the Main Committee today, no doubt we will return to this issue later.

I am happy to put the member for Barton’s mind at rest with regard to the extensive consultations with credit counsellors, amongst others, that have gone into the development of the bills. The member for Barton also criticised the abolition of the early discharge scheme. Since there is an amendment proposed to be moved in respect of that, I will reserve comment on it until the amendment is moved. The member for Barton criticised the maintenance in the Bankruptcy Act of a provision to maintain the gambling offence. In respect of this, the government decided not to repeal the gambling offence in the Bankruptcy Act. The government acknowledges that problem gambling is a real addiction that requires treatment, but believes that gambling which shows careless disregard for creditors’ interests should carry a criminal sanction. In practice, very few people are prosecuted, as only the most blatant cases are prosecuted and, even then, only in conjunction with other offences. The existence of the offence assists some trustees in the administration of bankrupt estates. Trustees and creditors report that some mischievous bankrupts will often claim that they have incurred losses at the casino...
or at the races when they are questioned about what has happened to money borrowed. When trustees mention the offence, such bankrupts will often come up with a more truthful answer which helps locate assets.

I commend the bills to the House. The government opposes the second reading amendment. It would be appropriate that the Main Committee report the bills to the House without amendment.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. B.C. Scott)—The original question was that this bill be now read a second time. To this, the honourable member for Barton has moved an amendment that all words after ‘That’ be omitted with a view to substituting other words. The immediate question is that the words proposed to be omitted stand part of the question.

Question agreed to.
Original question agreed to.
Bill read a second time.

Consideration in Detail

Bill—by leave—taken as a whole.

Mr McCLELLAND (Barton) (10.56 a.m.)—by leave—I move opposition amendments (1) to (9):

(1) Schedule 1, item 127, page 29 (lines 19 and 20), omit the item, substitute

**127 Subsection 149S(1)**

Omit “6 months”, substitute “2 years”.

(2) Schedule 1, after item 172, page 37 (after line 19), insert:

**172A Subsection 215A(1)**

Omit the subsection, substitute:

(1) A resolution that is passed at a meeting of creditors and purports to:

(a) nominate one or more persons under subsection 204(4) to be a trustee or trustees; or

(b) appoint a person under subsection 220(1) to a vacant office of trustee of a deed of assignment, deed of arrangement or composition;

is void unless the person or each of the persons:

(c) gave written consent before the meeting to act as a trustee of the deed or composition; and

(d) made a declaration in writing of the person's professional, business and personal relationships and connections (if any) with the debtor and with the creditor or creditors who proposed the resolution, and gave all persons entitled to vote on the resolution a reasonable opportunity to inspect the declaration.

(3) Schedule 1, after item 172, page 37 (after line 19) insert:

**172B Subsection 215A(1A)**

Omit the subsection, substitute:

(1A) As soon as possible after the resolution is passed, each person (except the Official Trustee) nominated or appointed by the resolution must give to the Official Receiver a copy of the consent and the declaration that relates to that person.

(4) Schedule 1, after item 173, page 37 (after line 21), insert:

**173A After subsection 222(5)**

 REPRESENTATIVES MAIN COMMITTEE
(5A) Where the Court, on the application of the Inspector-General, the trustee or a creditor, is satisfied that:

(a) if the vote or votes of a related creditor or related creditors on a proposed resolution at a meeting of creditors under this Part were disregarded, the proposed resolution:

(i) if it was in fact passed - would not have been passed; or
(ii) if in fact it was not passed - would have been passed; or the question would have had to be decided on a casting vote; and

(b) the passing of the proposed resolution, or the failure to pass it:

(i) is contrary to the interests of the creditors as a whole or a class of the creditors as a whole; or

(ii) has prejudiced, or is reasonably likely to prejudice, the interests of the creditors who voted against the proposed resolution, or for it (as the case may be), to an extent that is unreasonable having regard to:

(A) the benefits resulting to the related creditor, or to some or all of the related creditors, from the resolution, or from the failure to pass the proposed resolution; and
(B) the nature of the relationship between the related creditor or related creditors and the debtor; and
(C) any other relevant matter,

the Court may make an order declaring the deed or composition to be void or declaring any provision of the deed or composition to be void.

(5B) In subsection (5), related creditor means a creditor who is any of the following:

(a) a relative, or de facto spouse, of the debtor;
(b) a relative of a spouse, or of a de facto spouse, of the debtor;
(c) a beneficiary under a trust of which the debtor is or has at any time been a trustee;
(d) a relative, or de facto spouse, of such a beneficiary;
(e) a relative of a spouse, or of a de facto spouse, of such a beneficiary;
(f) a trustee of a trust under which the debtor is or has at any time been a beneficiary;
(g) a relative, or de facto spouse, of such a trustee;
(h) a relative of a spouse, or of a de facto spouse, of such a trustee;

and in this subsection, relative, in relation to a person, means the spouse, parent or remoter lineal ancestor, son, daughter or remoter issue, or brother or sister of the person.

(5) Schedule 1, after item 173, page 37 (after line 21) insert:

173B Subsection 222(6)

Omit (2) or (4)”, substitute “(2), (4) or (5A)”.

(6) Schedule 1, after item 173, page 37 (after line 2), insert:

173C Subsection 222(7)

Omit “(2) or (4)”, substitute “(2), (4) or (5A)”.

(7) Schedule 1, after item 177, page 39 (after line 29), insert:
177A After subsection 237A(2)

Add

(2A) Unless the creditors, by special resolution, agree that such of the provisions of section 120 to 124 (inclusive) as the creditors determine do not apply to a deed of arrangement, those provisions apply, subject to such modifications and adaptations (if any) as are prescribed, to and in relation to the deed of arrangement as if-

(a) a sequestration order had been made against the debtor on the day on which he or she executed the deed; and

(b) the trustee of the deed were the trustee in bankruptcy.

(8) Schedule 1, after item 178, page 41 (after line 27), insert

178A Subsection 265(8)

After “has contracted a debt”, insert “other than to meet necessary household or personal expenses”.

(9) Schedule 1, after item 182, page 42 (after line 3), insert:

182A Section 271

Repeal the section.

In support of our amendments, I rely on the arguments which I set out in the second reading response. It is not necessary to add anything further to those arguments.

Mr WILLIAMS (Tangney—Attorney-General) (10.56 a.m.)—As the member for Wentworth pointed out, the Bankruptcy Legislation Amendment Bill 2002 and the Bankruptcy (Estate Charges) Amendment Bill 2002 are basically the same bills as were introduced in June last year, and were actually debated and passed in the Senate with amendment. They have been on the Notice Paper for some time and were listed for debate in the previous week’s sittings. At the request of the opposition, they were not debated during the last week of sittings; they were listed for debate this week. As of yesterday, my office was in contact with the office of the member for Barton as to the status of the opposition position in relation to the bills. We were told nothing about the extensive amendments that were tabled today for the first time. If the process in parliament is to proceed with some regard to the public interest, a little more courtesy needs to be shown by the opposition in dealing with government bills that have been around for a long time.

The government opposes all of the amendments. I propose to comment on the amendment which would retain the early discharge scheme. I do not propose, without the opportunity of detailed consideration, to comment on the remaining amendments. At this stage, as I said, we will oppose them.

In relation to the proposed amendment to retain the early discharge scheme while extending it from six months to two years, it will not address the inherent unfairness and anomalies in the scheme. Claims by Labor that retaining early discharge would allow low-income bankrupts to recover quickly missed the point. It is the bankruptcy, not the discharge—early or otherwise—which gives debtors relief from their creditors and the fresh start that they need. The loss of access to credit is the most obvious impact of bankruptcy, and the names of all bankrupts, whether discharged or not, remain on the Credit Advantage database for seven years and on the ITSA public database permanently.

The member for Barton claimed that there was insufficient evidence as to the need for abolition of early discharge. When early discharge was introduced by Labor in 1992, it was ar-
argued that keeping low income debtors bankrupt for three years served no useful purpose if their bankruptcy was due more to misfortune than misdeed or unless it was commercially reprehensible behaviour. As I have already said, the qualifying criteria established by Labor have not been an adequate test of whether the bankruptcy arose from misfortune rather than misdeed. Approximately 60 per cent of bankrupts are eligible for early discharge. There is no evidence to suggest that the remaining 40 per cent of bankruptcies were due to misdeed rather than misfortune. We remain of the view that the bill should be passed unamended.

Mr McCLELLAND (Barton) (11.00 a.m.)—I take on board the Attorney-General’s comments regarding notice. I simply say that the amendments that we have put, particularly in respect of part X, are complex. We were of two minds as to whether we would move them in the House or in the Senate. We thought that we would bring them on today in the House in order to give the government the opportunity to consider those before the legislation arrives in the Senate. Indeed, we have agreed to the bill being dealt with in these less formal proceedings in the Main Committee in order not to impede the government’s timetable nor the progress of the legislation. So while I take on board the comments, I speak in defence of my office by making those points.

Question negatived.

Bill agreed to.

Ordered that this bill be reported to the House without amendment.

BANKRUPTCY (ESTATE CHARGES) AMENDMENT BILL 2002

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 21 March, on motion by Mr Williams:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Ordered that this bill be reported to the House without amendment.

CUSTOMS TARIFF AMENDMENT BILL (No. 1) 2002

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 21 March, on motion by Mr Williams:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Mr MELHAM (Banks) (11.03 a.m.)—The opposition supports the Customs Tariff Amendment Bill (No. 1) 2002 to allow the Australian Customs Service to continue to do its work efficiently. The purpose of the bill is to enact a range of amendments to the Customs Tariff Act 1995. It is proposed that a new subsection be inserted which specifies that a reference in interpretation rules to notes will also include additional notes.

The interpretation rules are important as they form the basis for the classification of goods. The additional notes are inserted into the tariff by the government and have the same force as the international section and chapter notes. They are commonly included as a consequence of court decisions for the purposes of clarifying the classification of goods. In a recent case before the Administrative Appeals Tribunal, the issue of Australian additional notes was raised in comparison with the international section and chapter notes. While the Customs decision in this matter was affirmed, it was believed prudent to amend this section to preclude any future legal challenge. This amendment will do so.
The second amendment relates to the classification of salsas as a kind of sauce. A new additional note will be inserted into chapter 3 of the Customs Tariff Act 1995 that specifies that salsas are to be classified in heading 2103. The classification of salsas has been a matter of dispute for some time. Advice provided by the World Customs Organisation indicated that salsas are correctly classified in heading 2103 as they have the characteristics of a sauce. This additional note will ensure that Australian practice is consistent with international practice.

The third amendment provides for a post-2005 phasing rate of duty in item 59 in schedule 4 of the Customs Tariff Amendment Act 1999 to ensure that the correct rate of duty applies to the import of second-hand passenger motor vehicles, PMVs. Changes to the act in 1999 inadvertently left out phasing rates for second-hand motor vehicles with a permit. This amendment allows the phasing rates of second-hand motor vehicles with a permit to be brought into line with those already in place for second-hand vehicles without a permit and for new vehicles. There are also amendments relating to the phasing rate of duty for rubber pipes and tubes used in passenger motor vehicles and for mittens and mitts lined with fur skin and used for sporting purposes. There are a number of other changes which correct minor editorial matters. These amendments are all in line with allowing the Australian Customs Service to carry out its normal duties. I commend the bill to the House.

Ms JULIE BISHOP (Curtin) (11.06 a.m.)—I am sure the member for Banks will agree with me that one of the more challenging aspects of debating bills which are rather technical in nature is to find an aspect that is just a little more imaginative or perhaps a little more stimulating than just reciting the mechanics of the amendments. When I was researching the Customs Tariff Amendment Bill (No. 1) 2002 I discovered some intriguing facts about salsa. I feel compelled to share these facts with members of this chamber for, as the member for Banks said, a salsa controversy is at the heart of one of the amendments.

It was Alondo de Molina who, in 1571, opened the eyes of Europe to the wonders of salsa. I cannot tell you whether he made any other specific discoveries or any other contribution to humanity. It seems that for tens of centuries the native peoples of the Americas had cultivated the tomato and pepper plants and improved and developed them into the foods that we recognise today. By the time of the Spanish conquest in 1521, the Aztecs had come to consume a condiment—they served it on turkey, venison, lobster and fish—made from the combination of chilli peppers and ground squash seeds. It was this paste that de Molina christened salsa, or sauce. The salsa invasion really stepped up in the 1940s after the war, when Pace Foods of San Antonio in Texas began experimenting with bottling of salsa sauces. While modern salsa is sold primarily in the West as a sauce composed of tomatoes, onions and chillies, it actually encompasses a wide variety of flavours including papaya, mango, plantain and corn. Just as the variety of salsas available has expanded, the penetration of salsas into the world snack food market has been remarkable.

I have a few interesting statistics. In 1988 just 16 per cent of American households regularly purchased salsa. In only four years that proportion jumped to 36 per cent. Salsa—and this is the exciting bit—now outsells tomato ketchup in the United States. This is not a small market. The total sales of snack foods in the United States was $60.8 billion in 2001. Today the average American receives nearly 25 per cent of his or her daily caloric intake from snack foods. International trade in snacks is, not surprisingly, big business. American exports of potato chips alone are worth approximately $225 million and the trade mostly flows to Japan, Mexico, Canada, Korea and Hong Kong.

Trade barriers continue to afflict the international exchange of these foods, disadvantaging buyers and sellers alike. In a presentation made to the National Association of Chain Drug
Stores, Jennifer Hillman of the US International Trade Commission outlined the barriers in question: tariffs throughout South America that apply to most snack foods at rates between 17 and 21 per cent; tariffs in Japan and China ranging from 10 to 30 per cent on items such as chips and biscuits; European Union tariffs on confectionery and biscuits complicated by tariff rates based on dairy, sugar and starch levels; the required disclosure of proprietary information such as production processes and ingredient lists in sales to nations such as Japan, Argentina, Chile, Korea, Hungary, China, Taiwan and Russia; heavy restrictions on sugar based snacks exported to Korea, the European Union, China, India and Hungary; and prohibitions on certain internationally accepted food colourings and additives.

Interestingly, the Minister for Trade noted in his speech to the National Press Club last year that Chilli Man, a firm based in the Hunter Valley, now exports chillies, chilli sauce and salsa to Mexico. So there is a case of Australians 'selling coal to Newcastle'! The bill before the House recognises the particular importance in international trade of the proper classification of salsa and the importance of a harmonised commodity description and coding system. In a contribution that I made to the House last year, in the August debate on the Customs Tariff Amendment Bill (No. 5) 2001, I had the opportunity to discuss at length the role of the system since 1988 in the multipurpose classification of goods available for purchase internationally, so I will not go through it again. Suffice it to say that the system provides a six-digit classification code, extended to eight or 10 digits when used by individual countries, that classifies a good on the basis of its economic activity or component material.

The bill now before the chamber inserts a new additional note into chapter 21 of the Customs Tariff Act 1995 to ensure that salsa is classified under heading 2103 with other sauces. This measure has been adopted in line with recommendations made by the World Customs Organisation relating to the controversial issue of salsa classification. It will ensure that Australia's treatment of imported and exported salsa is consistent with international practice.

The Customs Tariff Amendment Bill also makes a number of more general—less tasty—changes to the Customs Tariff Act. Item 1 of schedule 1 of the bill inserts a new subsection 7(3) so as to specify that a reference made in the interpretation rules to 'notes' includes a reference to 'additional notes'—the kind of addition made with regard to salsa. As the interpretation rules form the basis for the classification of goods within the act, this amendment will ensure that additional notes have the same legal force as international section and chapter notes. The bill also inserts a phasing rate of duty, beginning in 2005, for item 59 in schedule 4 of the act to ensure that the correct rate of duty applies to second-hand passenger motor vehicles. Without this amendment, an anomaly would arise after 2005 courtesy of the Customs Tariff Amendment (ACIS Implementation) Act 1999—between the rates of duty imposed on new and second-hand cars. Finally, the bill makes some editorial amendments to the schedules, dealing with format, spelling errors and the like.

So this bill, while certainly technical in nature, is another step forward in the expansion of Australia's trading relationships with the nations of the world. This is not just a question of theory—it is easy, after all, to laugh at the dogma of two believers in market efficiency where, when walking down a street, one says, 'Isn't that a $10 note?' and the other says, 'Obviously not. If it were, somebody would have picked it up'—it is also a question of fact, underlined by logic and borne out by history. When two parties meet to freely negotiate and enter into a contract, both the buyer and the seller win. This government recognises that reality and is determined to make trade freer, to the benefit of Australia and the benefit of the world. I commend this bill to the chamber.
Mr WILLIAMS (Tangney—Attorney-General) (11.13 a.m.)—in reply—One of the least intriguing aspects of my responsibility in representing the Minister for Justice and Customs in the House is taking customs tariff amendment bills through the House or the Main Committee. I think what the member for Curtin has demonstrated is that there is something to be said about almost anything—I commend her research. I invite the shadow minister for justice and customs to undertake a similar exercise in the future to make the debates a bit more interesting.

In this debate on the Customs Tariff Amendment Bill (No. 1) 2002 there was similar scope for an excursus on fur-lined mittens and mitts of leather for use in sport. The member for Banks should have picked up on that. There is even a subject that has some political contention—the rate of duty on the importation of second-hand passenger motor vehicles—but even that did not generate significant debate. In the absence of anything to say about the subject of salsa—except that we will now no longer be able to tell how much salsa comes in because it will be categorised with all other sauces—I also commend the bill to the Main Committee for report to the House without amendment.

Question agreed to.
Bill read a second time.

Ordered that this bill be reported to the House without amendment.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

East Timor

Debate resumed from 29 May, on motion by Mr Ian Macfarlane:

That the House take note of the following paper:
East Timor-Ministerial Statement, 15 May.

Mr LAURIE FERGUSON (Reid) (11.16 a.m.)—People who have preceded me in this debate have referred to its timeliness in the context of changes to Australia’s military leadership and our intervention in Timor. However, it is timely in other senses. This week we saw in our newspapers coverage of testimony by Domingos dos Santos Mouzinho, a woman who was one of the few people courageous enough to give testimony against the militias and the Indonesian forces about the murders that they perpetrated. Similarly, when we discuss what is timely, we have had indications from East Timor’s Prime Minister Alkatiri about their continuing interest in renegotiating the maritime boundaries.

I commend the member for Curtin: I did not hear other contributions in this debate but she very clearly articulated the long-term suffering of the Timorese people and referred to figures of 200,000 to 250,000 people who died during the Indonesian occupation. The Minister for Foreign Affairs talked of some people who had joined, at some point, in this struggle. I have to say that his travel to that road was quite late. In fact, history is not going to be as kind to Australia as some people might assume. We have attempted to rewrite history as showing a courageous effort by this country.

Quite frankly, Australia’s intervention followed a change of position by the Clinton administration and the decline of the internal situation in Indonesia. That was what really allowed a shift of Australia’s position. I note that, throughout the period leading up to that, the foreign minister spent many question times berating and ridiculing Labor’s then shadow spokesman on foreign affairs, the member for Kingsford-Smith, when he belatedly, and quite correctly, changed the Labor Party’s position in this matter. That was an act of courage which was resisted by many people within the Labor Party. When we look at the history of these
events, the reality is that the opposition shifted far earlier than the government. The government was basically dragged along by circumstances. I note, for instance, that on 11 May 1999 the Prime Minister was still trying to throw up the image that there were very few options. He said then:

... we could throw up our arms in horror, say that the Indonesian government is not a government with which we wish to deal, walk away, sever our military ties, sever our aid ties and give up any capacity to exercise diplomatic influence.

In fact, his attitude was typical of Australian administrations, Labor and Liberal, over the 25 years of Indonesian occupation. I understand some of the difficulties in this region but, essentially, Australia tended to be one of Indonesia’s greatest comforters internationally. With the exception of the Islamic world, which could be relied upon by Indonesia in all forums, Australia was the country which went to these meetings and tried to undermine the criticism of the rest of the world towards Timor.

I want to refer to the contribution of Mr Paul Dibb on 22 May last. We might be a pluralistic society, and we should basically allow all people to make a contribution, but this moronic contribution from Paul Dibb in last week’s *Australian* must go down as an all-time low. For this person to associate himself with ‘strategic knowledge’ is questionable. He made a major point of East Timor describing itself as the Democratic Republic of East Timor, and he made some analogy with Vietnam. The fact that these two countries have the word ‘democratic’ in their titles is supposedly very material.

The Democratic and Popular Republic of Algeria, the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia and the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka are diametrically different from both East Timor and Vietnam, but Paul Dibb, this so-called strategic thinker, comes to the Australian population and inferences that, because they use the word ‘democratic’ in their name, they are somehow similar to the Vietnamese regime. He had the audacity to say that Fretilin—the group elected by the East Timorese people—will cause trouble in government, which, quite frankly, is a rather preposterous proposition.

He also lamented Portugal’s strategic aims, as though Portugal will somehow intervene in this region and have an interest against Australians. Quite frankly, it was a very poor article. I was pleased to see Dr Damien Kingsbury, a person with far more knowledge of East Timorese circumstances, take it to task the next day.

I want to put on record my own position with regard to Portugal’s record. It is very conventional in Australian politics for both the defenders of the Indonesians and some of the people on the left of the political spectrum to attack Portugal for 400 years of colonialism. People like Paul Dibb would have loved this regime, which was overthrown in 1975, during the Cold War. They would have defended Salazar and the fascist regime in Portugal because it was supposedly a bulwark against communism. They now turn around and say how dreadful Portugal was during this period.

The revolution in 1975, which overthrew the government, changed Portugal dramatically. It is part of Europe now, it is a very modern economy and it is a very progressive country. For Australia to excuse its own performance in East Timor over 25 years because Portugal was a very poor colonial power is totally irrelevant. The world should appreciate that the struggle to give the East Timorese people their rights was led by Portugal in the United Nations and everywhere else around the world. In every forum, Portugal was the country that kept the struggle going, supported by its former colonies Angola, Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau and Sao Tome. They were the countries that led this, along with some of the European countries. I very much deplore the easy lie that Portuguese colonialism left East Timor in a very poor
state—although it did—but to blame Portugal for the last 25 years, because of what happened for over 400 years, is rather an unintelligent analysis.

I want to take this opportunity to put on the public record the names of people who have been very active in this struggle over 25 years. My own interest was inspired by John Birch, who then worked for Community Aid Abroad. He came to my local party branch and spoke on this matter at the earliest point of the struggle. I then had contact with Pat Walsh from ACFOA in Melbourne, who was a very strong activist in this matter. It is important to mention some of the people who, over the 25 years when Labor and Liberal went along with Indonesian foreign policy, kept a light burning and kept the struggle going. They are: Linda Pillay; Bishop Cremin from Sydney, Paddy Kennealy, Gordon Hart, Tom Uren; former veterans from the East Timor experience; Stephen Langford; Bruce Haigh, a former diplomat; Jim Dunn; Jim Albury; Gerry Herrera and the Hobart East Timor Group; Debra Hamilton; John Pilger; Scott Burchell; Andy McNaughton and ATEA, Jude Conway and the East Timor International Support Group; Bishop Pat Power; Michael Wagner; Trish Fury; the Josephite nuns; the Mary McKillop Institute, which has done so much in the overall struggle of East Timor and also preserved the Tetum language in East Timor; Shirley Shackleton, who of course led the Australian interest following the demise of her husband and a number of other journalists; John Sinnott and ATEA Victoria; Dr George Aditijondoro; Rob Wesley-Smith and Australians for an Independent East Timor; and Andy Alcock, and the Campaign for an Independent East Timor.

In the early days in this House, Ken Fry, Tony Lamb and Senator Gordon McIntosh from WA were some of the people who were critical of Labor’s early support of the seizure of East Timor. For her work over the years I particularly want to congratulate Senator Vicki Bourne, who has been ceaseless in her efforts in this matter. The former member for Ballarat, Michael Ronaldson; the current member for Calare, Peter Andren; Lindsay Tanner, the member for Melbourne; and a number of other colleagues have kept this issue going.

I think it is important that we do face up to the fact that Australia’s record in the matter is, as I said earlier, not impressive. Throughout the situation internationally, when the matter was raised there were endeavours to basically reword clauses in international meetings to give comfort to Indonesia. Australia was not at the forefront and it is wrong to say so.

I want to also support and endorse the activities of foreign aid organisations in East Timor at the moment, and most particularly AFEDA, the affiliate of the Australian Council of Trade Unions, and in particular the CFMEU. It is very interesting to note that, as we are all congratulating ourselves over Australia’s efforts in East Timor, the current government as part of its royal commission into the building industry is actually insisting that foreign aid organisations working in East Timor photocopy hundreds of pages of evidence up there in Timor to investigate aid given to the Timorese by the CFMEU. This is the extreme use of taxpayers’ money to try to undermine working conditions in this country—insisting that foreign aid organisations in Timor waste their time and resources to investigate what donations the CFMEU has given to them. It is a very trying circumstance for those people.

In conclusion, I do not think history is going to be as kind to Australia as some people might hope. We are not going to be able to wash away 20-odd years of complicity with Indonesia. That was the country that essentially tried to undermine international opposition, by the Europeans in particular. It is an attempt to rewrite history and say that it was Australia that led the way, that we were the ones that changed the ballgame—the ballgame was changed by internal circumstances in Indonesia: the collapse of the administration and the disappearance of the Suharto regime. It was also changed, as I said earlier, by an alteration of US foreign pol-
icy. Australia was given the green light by the United States that they essentially wanted intervention. Obviously I congratulate the Timorese community in this country, and internationally in Portugal in particular. Refugees there kept this issue burning despite the major international players not being interested.

Debate (on motion by Mr Wakelin) adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr WAKELIN (Grey) (11.28 a.m.)—I move:

That the Main Committee do now adjourn.

Australia Post

Mr SERCOMBE (Maribyrnong) (11.29 a.m.)—Australia Post is undoubtedly one of the world’s best and most profitable public postal enterprises. I guess a measure of the strength of the organisation is the fact that last year Australia Post paid the government an agreed dividend of $165 million. In addition to that, the federal government ripped out a special dividend of $110 million from the organisation. Undoubtedly, ripping out that special dividend was a significant factor in Australia Post needing for the first time in a decade to lift the standard postage rate by 5c.

For some strange reason, however, this government seems to have an ideological obsession about change and the deregulation of postal services in ways that undermine the capacity of this organisation to continue to be as successful as it has been, and in the process do damage to Australians—particularly Australians outside the major metropolitan areas—and also to the work force of Australia Post. We have seen, fortunately, the government’s failure to get deregulation of postal services by statute. There have been successful community and union campaigns and opposition from the non-government parties in the Senate.

However, it appears at this stage that the threat of deregulation of postal services is not yet over. Last year, at the World Trade Organisation discussions in Doha, it was agreed to commence liberalisation negotiations between WTO member states on a range of industries, including postal and courier services. I understand that the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade has directed the department of communications to conduct industry consultations on these particular matters.

There is no doubt that the deregulation of postal and courier services in Australia, as a consequence of the WTO agreement, would dramatically restrict the operations of Australia Post and would certainly provide discounted access for overseas operators to Australia Post’s retail and delivery networks in a way which would enable cherry picking of the profitable services but leave the unprofitable ones in diabolical trouble.

The Sydney Morning Herald back in April had an article headed ‘Europe wants to muscle in on post, water markets’. We know what strong advocates the European Union are of trade liberalisation, particularly in agriculture—ha, ha!—but nonetheless they want to cherry pick Australia’s postal services in ways that are quite negative. It would appear that this government is not doing sufficient at present to foreclose that option. I call on the government to ensure that Australia makes it quite clear that we are not in the process of undermining one of the best and most profitable public postal enterprises in the world by going down that track.

I do not have time today to discuss a range of other areas, including the foreshadowed introduction of franchise outlets in the Australia Post network and the threat that they pose to both licensed and corporate post offices. I will speak about that matter on another occasion. In the short time remaining to me I want to talk about a matter that particularly affects my own
state—in fact, particularly my own region and that of the member for Burke. I refer to a proposal by Australia Post to centralise all letter operations at Dandenong in the far south-east of Melbourne, an area that I am sure you are quite familiar with, Madam Deputy Speaker Corcoran. This represents a huge inconvenience for the large number of workers who live in electorates like mine and that of the member for Burke, who may have to travel very lengthy distances to keep their employment in the letters operation.

There have been a range of discussions about the adverse impacts of centralising mail operations. I draw to the House’s attention an extreme case scenario: we have seen in the United States the real and implied threat to postal services, in the context of our concerns about terrorism, by way of the introduction of biological agents into the mail. One can imagine the chaos that would descend upon postal services in a city the size of Melbourne if they were centralised in a place like Dandenong: it will lead to total chaos and a breakdown of services for a lengthy period of time. There are other less dramatic reasons why the mail service might break down if it is centralised, but that is the most extreme one. In the current environment it is certainly a real possibility. I think there are other options, such as bringing forward the parcel centre proposed for Ardeer, and including a letter handling operation as part of that. (Time expired)

Gilmore Electorate: Magnolia Cottage Dementia Day Care Respite Centre

Mrs GASH (Gilmore) (11.34 a.m.)—This is a transcript of a speech given by Sarah Vivian at the official opening of Magnolia Cottage Dementia Day Care Respite Centre on Tuesday, 7 May 2002. I have not changed any words or explanations; I think at the end of the reading you will see why I wanted to share this with colleagues from all sides. Too often we only look at the negatives in life and how refreshing it is to see the positive through the eyes of someone else. I quote:

Today I will share with you my experience of the difference the Magnolia Cottage Dementia Day Respite Centre has made in the lives of my grandmother and my family, something about which I am not able to overstate. My grandmother Pat has been attending the Magnolia Cottage since late last year. At the time she was withdrawn, depressed and socially isolated. There were few places we could take her where she felt safe and where others would understand her condition. We looked for ways to help her feel useful and valuable, but she had just lost her zest for life. She even told us that she had become worthless and good for nothing. As her family and carers, this distressed us. We were also depressed, exhausted, frustrated and grieving. We made a commitment to care for my grandmother at home, but without the support of wider family or community services, the situation looked hopeless.

We were impressed with Magnolia Cottage from the moment of first contact. My grandmother was treated with respect, dignity and in a friendly manner. Cathy, Denise and Maree managed to smile through my grandmother’s wild mood changes and challenging behaviour as she struggled to cope with the change in her routine. Despite my grandmother’s initial objections about going to an unfamiliar place, we could see the benefits within a short time. She would come home and try to tell us about her day’s activities. Although she struggled to explain herself, it was clear that she was excited, motivated and pleased with herself. She even began to laugh again!

Gradually Magnolia Cottage had become a much anticipated outing. Every morning my grandmother asks, ‘Am I going to see the people today?’ or ‘Should I get ready for work today?’ It is funny that at times she thinks that Magnolia is her workplace because she has said to me, ‘I’m going to find out why I haven’t got my pay yet! I think we should see about it.’ Magnolia Cottage has helped to restore her self worth, self-respect and has helped her re-establish an independent identity. You will notice I have spoken so far of the benefits to my grandmother. This is because these benefits flow on to her carers.

Dementia is an illness that is not easily understood or managed because it changes the very nature of the person who has it. Day respite offers carers time out to attend to personal finances, to enjoy a quiet cup of coffee or to catch up on some sleep. This is time when you can allow yourself to heal from the emo-
tional wounds that your loved one will unwittingly inflict upon you. It is reassuring to know the time of respite is enjoyed by grandmother as much, if not more, than myself and my family. Magnolia Cottage Day Care Respite Centre has ensured that my grandmother will continue to be part of our home and community life. And that is something you cannot measure in monetary value.

On behalf of all carers, I would like to thank Cathy, Maree and Denise, the local volunteers, the Churches of Christ Aged Care Ministry and all local, state and federal governments who support this service. In my grandmother’s words, ‘You are good and decent people.’ It is my fervent prayer that this service will be recognised as being of vital importance in supporting the less fortunate aged people in our community. People who continue to love and be loved, despite some tremendous obstacles. Thank you.

Sarah is 26 years of age and a teacher with adult education and is one of nature’s gifts to the community. After her speech, I cannot begin to tell you how proud I am of her and the example that she sets not only to her peers but to the community as a whole. Sarah, thank you for being you and for the way that you care for your grandmother. You are an inspiration to us all.

**Transport: Western Highway**

Mr BRENDAN O’CONNOR (Burke) (11.38 a.m.)—This morning I rise to express my grave concern about the serious neglect of the Western Highway, Victoria’s principal road transport link between Melbourne and Adelaide. The Western Highway corridor strategy developed by VicRoads outlines a development plan for this highway from Deer Park, which is at the southern end of my seat—it borders and cuts across the electorates of Burke and Maribyrnong—all the way to the South Australian border. The key initiatives of this program between Melbourne and Ballarat include upgrade to full freeway standards; a new freeway connection to the Western Ring Road; improved access control between the Western Ring Road and Melton Bypass; a realignment between Melton and Bacchus Marsh; and, in general terms, improved safety and access control east of Ballarat. It is self-evident that these targeted improvements will benefit businesses, local communities and visitors who use this highway.

In recent years the communities of Deer Park, Burnside, Caroline Springs, Melton, Rock Bank and Bacchus Marsh have been promised the improvements that I have outlined this morning. To date, no concrete commitment has been provided, nor have any of the promises that have been made on various occasions been fulfilled. Everyone holds the view that this responsibility lies solely at the feet of the federal government. The state government has made commitments to match funding in the event that those commitments are honoured. However, notwithstanding the comments made by the Treasurer prior to the election when he visited the Burke electorate and, in a local paper, made commitments to the area of the Western Highway, he has not fulfilled those commitments in the budget statements made only a number of weeks ago.

Apart from the great importance this transport link holds for all of those who reside between Deer Park and the South Australian border, I want to highlight some of the matters that have come to my attention in recent months. Together with the member for Ballarat—and in conjunction with the member for Maribyrnong and the state member for Melton, Mr Don Nardella—I convened a meeting of interested parties who have long-held concerns about the neglect of this highway. The municipalities of Brimbank, Melton, Moorabool and Ballarat were all represented and also in attendance was the Western Highway Action Committee and the Rockbank Action Group. These councils and groups met with us and discussed the historic failings of this government to address problems of the safety issues associated with the
highway and the congestion that is growing as a result of the development of the communities of Caroline Springs and Burnside.

Although most parts of the highway route have accident histories below or comparable with the typical Victorian rural casualty rate, some areas are very dangerous. Between Melbourne and Ballarat, where the highway is four-lane divided, the casualty rate and severity of accidents are very high, especially along the sections where direct access is not controlled and there are ‘at grade’ intersections. A report commissioned by VicRoads states:

The three sections with high casualty accident rates are: at Hopkins Road, Deer Park; Anthony’s Cutting and Deep Creek Cutting … and between Leigh Creek and Woodmans Hill, east of Ballarat. The casualty accident rate through the highway section between Rockbank and Melton is only slightly higher than the State average, however the proportion of serious/fatality accidents is high.

This morning I bring to the attention of this place a very critical matter for these communities. We have met already once and we intend to meet again soon. We foreshadow our intention to invite the Deputy Prime Minister, the Minister for Transport and Regional Services, to visit these hot spots—these areas in which people are dying every couple of months on average; in particular along the areas of Rock Bank. We ask the federal government to honour its commitments and ensure that this road is safe for the communities within my electorate and surrounding electorates and to respond to the outcry in the communities that this matter must be redressed immediately.

Paul, Mrs Dorothy Eleanor

Mr BALDWIN (Paterson) (11.43 a.m.)—I rise today to advise the House that, on 8 May at 6.50 p.m., Dorothy Eleanor Paul succumbed to her battle with cancer. She wrote of her final day:

Please give me a happy funeral, few flowers,
Donations instead to Cancer Research,
Perhaps the Garvan Institute.
Plenty of music and song at the Chapel.
Jean McKinnon and Narelle Ballinger in charge
But I DO WANT “MORNING HAS BROKEN”
Have a good gathering afterwards.
Have it catered. With plenty of drinkies!!
I want you all to have sore heads - ha ha!
If there is an Oration—
“I was born to a loving, caring home,
as I was growing I had to be pushed aside
that was because of circumstances of the time.
I had loving and kind Aunts, Uncles and Cousins”.

Dorothy Eleanor Paul entered this world at Cronulla in mid-February 1925 to become the only child of Bill and Gladys Judd. She grew up in the town and was educated at the Winston College for Young Ladies in Cronulla; and a lady she was in every sense of the word.

During and following World War II she devoted a considerable amount of time to repairing and maintaining library books at Red Cross House in Sydney—of course, as always, on a voluntary basis. After the death of her father in 1959, she replaced her small Prefect car with his then modern Dodge sedan. This was to become a landmark around town as the provider of transport for the Red Cross orphans program.
During the early 1950s, Dot, together with several girlfriends, travelled in England and Europe on a working holiday basis for an extended period. It was after crossing the path of a fine young man Ian Paul, who was also reared in Cronulla, that subtle manipulation from two exasperated widows resulted in the tying of the knot in 1967. Thereafter, merriment followed, with all of the vagaries of old-time bank movements throughout Ian’s banking career, with postings in Hobart, Sydney, Cobar, Maitland and Sydney suburbs. With all of these movements, Dorothy maintained her volunteer aspirations with such charitable organisations as Red Cross, the Country Women’s Association, Black and White committees and Lantern auxiliaries, culminating in an intense interest in the Royal Institute for Deaf and Blind Children at North Rocks, where she became an active supporter and a benefactor.

Following Ian’s retirement in 1983, becoming a farmer’s wife was actively pursued, both in the Lower Hunter and on the Central Coast, where neighbourly tennis activities were undertaken. From her early days as a teenager, Dorothy had had a very active interest in politics, starting with membership of the Young Liberals in Cronulla and the campaign against bank nationalisation in the 1940s. She continued her interest in politics throughout her last days, as an active member of the Liberal Party. Dorothy had the ability to compare party platforms with the public perception of them and was often able to act as a bridge between the aspiring politician and the elector.

I must confess that without the friendship, support and guidance of Dorothy and Ian—or, as we affectionately call them, Uncle and Aunty Ollie—I would not have entered federal parliament. Her opinions were valued by those interested in the political system. You see, Dorothy was a people person with a sharp wit and dry sense of humour, ready to meet and talk with others from all walks of human life. She had very strong standards to be maintained in personal and public life, and she was never afraid to voice and act in accordance with those standards. In all things, Dorothy was very definite in her opinions and decisive when action was needed. The family nickname for her on some occasions was Miss Bossy Boots, to which she would simply laugh and say yes. In addition to her interest in current affairs, Dot was an avid reader of the latest books and commentaries, while at the same time rounding her interests by keeping in touch with the latest plays and programs at the opera.

From her early days, Dot had a firm Christian belief founded on a Presbyterian training and continued into the Uniting Church, of which she has been a strong supporter. During the four years of her illness Dot, as always, had been a realist and had made sure that Ian was well tutored in the intricacies of housework and how to look after himself. Dorothy was diagnosed as having cancer four years ago and during those years of treatment she demonstrated a courage that enabled her to die peacefully and with dignity. To a gathering of nurses and visitors at the hospital in her last days, she maintained her sense of humour and proportion when she said to them, ‘Well, if I pull this one off, won’t it be a big anticlimax!’ God bless you, Dorothy Eleanor Paul. As we celebrate your life, may you now rest in peace.

Indigenous Affairs: Reconciliation

Ms HOARE (Charlton) (11.48 a.m.)—I first acknowledge that we are meeting on Ngunnawal land today and I thank the traditional owners for that. I would also like to extend my congratulations to you, Madam Deputy Speaker Corcoran, on your election to this high office in our parliament. This is the first time that I have had the opportunity to speak when you have been in the chair. I extend to you my congratulations and those of my constituency. Today I would like to congratulate the Lake Macquarie City Council on its video titled We have survived. The video was launched on Monday, 27 May, just this week, to help celebrate Reconciliation Week. Reconciliation Week has become a major event on the national calendar and
is celebrated by hundreds of community events around the country. This year it will mark the 35th anniversary of the 1967 referendum and the 10th anniversary of the High Court Mabo judgment in 1992.

*We have survived* is a video of the Aboriginal people in Lake Macquarie. The video briefly illustrates the land called Lake Macquarie from an Aboriginal interpretation and the development of strong links between the Aboriginal community and local government. The video also demonstrates the Aboriginal community and local government working together. *We have survived* makes a contribution towards the process of reconciliation by presenting a positive image of the city’s Aboriginal people and the many services now available to them. It also presents a positive image of the work done by the area’s three land councils: Koompahtoo, Bahtabah and Awabakal.

The video will increase awareness of the important contribution indigenous people have made to the region. Reconciliation Week is an opportunity for us all to reflect on the meaning of reconciliation and its importance for our community and our nation. I congratulate Lake Macquarie City Council and the Aboriginal community on the launch of the video. It is yet another example of the council’s commitment to the principles of reconciliation. The process is ongoing and the momentum must be maintained. Projects such as this remind us all that we must work together to make reconciliation a reality in our communities, workplaces and organisations.

This is not the first time another step in the process towards reconciliation has happened in our city. Earlier this year, in January, the city gave a formal commitment to the Aboriginal people of the city of Lake Macquarie. In doing that, the council of the City of Lake Macquarie acknowledged that the Aboriginal people in this area—Awabakal and Woromi—were the first people of the land and are the proud survivors of more than 200 years of continuing dispossession.

Lake Macquarie City Council recognises that European occupation brought massive changes to the land and its people. It states:

> As a vital step towards building a just and common future, Lake Macquarie City Council recognises the sense of loss and the grief held by indigenous people for the alienation from their traditional land, the loss of their freedom, lives, languages and health, and the disruption of their cultural practices.

Council respects the right of indigenous Australians to pursue their own values and culture.

I seek leave to table the council’s commitments.

Leave granted.

**Ms HOARE**—I thank the Main Committee. I want to talk about the ongoing process and maintaining the momentum for reconciliation. I attended a lecture last night, the annual Fraser memorial lecture, at the Labor Club here in Canberra. The lecture was presented by Patrick Dodson. He was talking about the fact that the reconciliation process is ongoing but that achieving a reconciled Australia with integrity needs a commitment by government to nation building and an understanding that there are many nations across Australia. That goes hand in hand also with the idea of practical reconciliation of partnerships between government and communities.

I look forward to continuing to be part of that process and I congratulate all communities across the country on their efforts towards reconciliation. I congratulate them on their celebrations and we look forward to moving forward with them.

**Mr Brendan O’Connor**—Hear, hear!
Film Classification: Baise-Moi

Mrs DRAPER (Makin) (11.53 a.m.)—I also extend my congratulations to you, Madam Deputy Speaker Corcoran, on your election to office.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Corcoran)—Thank you.

Mrs DRAPER—I would like to take this opportunity to welcome the decision of the independent Classification Review Board to refuse classification to the French film Baise-Moi, effectively making it illegal to show the film in Australia.

I first became involved in this issue when alerted to the film’s horrendous and potentially damaging content by constituents in my Makin electorate. On 17 April, I wrote to the Prime Minister and the Attorney-General expressing my concern that the film contravened the Office of Film and Literature Classification guidelines. The original decision by the classification board to grant the film an R18+ rating was by the narrowest of margins, a vote of six to five. To his credit, the federal Attorney-General took action, because of his concerns, to request the Classification Review Board to review the rating given to this film. In a statement released on 21 April, the Attorney-General stated that he was persuaded that there is an arguable issue about whether Baise-Moi ought to have been classified R18+. There is merit in seeking a review of the board’s interpretation of the guidelines.

The information I had received about the content of the film, which was subsequently supported in several newspaper reviews of Baise-Moi, is that it contained scenes of actual sex and graphic sexual violence, namely rape. This is in clear contravention of the film classification guidelines. For the benefit of members opposite, I refer now to the guidelines for the R18+ classification, which state:

• Sexual violence may only be implied and should not be detailed;
• Gratuitous, exploitative or offensive depictions of cruelty or real violence will not be permitted; and finally—

Ms Hoare—Did you watch it?

Mrs DRAPER—Madam Deputy Speaker, I would appreciate some respect, thank you, while I make my speech. The guidelines go on to state:

• Sexual activity may be realistically simulated; the general rule is ‘simulation, yes—the real thing, no.’

It was clear to me that Baise-Moi did not comply with these very clear guidelines and that a serious error was made in granting it an R18+ rating. In fact, this film is so graphic that it would not even qualify under the guidelines for an X classification. X-rated films may contain depictions of actual sex but not of violence, sexual violence or sexual coercion. The only classification for which Baise-Moi did comply was RC, refused classification, which the review board properly gave to it.

I wish to now respond to the criticism of me by some, particularly on the left of politics, who have attacked me for taking a stand on this issue. I do not enjoy having to speak publicly about the degrading and dehumanising content which appears in films such as Baise-Moi. There are many other issues on which I am working with my constituents that bring me much greater satisfaction. I want to state for the record that I am not seeking to impose my moral standards on the community but unless we take a stand against the clear contravention of guidelines that have been established for, and with the general consent of, the community, we will quickly slide into allowing anything and everything to appear on our television and film screens.
Some say there would be no harm in this. I do not agree. There is enough evidence available to demonstrate the negative effects that extremely violent films have on certain individuals, especially those depicting graphic sexual violence. The community does want, and it supports, a degree of censorship because most people understand the need to balance the freedoms we all enjoy with the responsibilities of protecting society from those who would abuse those freedoms.

The Premier of New South Wales appears to be a member of the ‘anything goes’ brigade. His concern is that we may go back to the bad old days, but his political colleague in South Australia does not agree. The Labor Attorney-General in South Australia, Michael Atkinson, supports the ban on *Baise-Moi*. Can I say to Bob Carr that nothing is wrong with a bit of decency, commonsense and safety in our community. Less tolerance of violence depicted in all genres—as in the past—of films, videos, computer games and music, especially rap music, would surely be desirable. So what is the Premier of New South Wales, Bob Carr, afraid of? *(Time expired)*

Main Committee adjourned at 11.59 a.m.
QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

The following answers to questions were circulated:

Sydney (Kingsford Smith) Airport: Noise
(Question No. 25)

Mr Murphy asked the Minister for Transport and Regional Services, upon notice, on 13 February 2002:

(1) Further to his reply to question No. 2751 (Hansard, 20 August 2001, page 29818), what evidence can he provide to say whether Sydney Airport noise-affected communities perceive that Sydney Airport noise will, or will not, be a problem in future years.

(2) Has he conducted surveys of noise-affected residents or community groups to ascertain their perceptions.

(3) Has he provided to the public for scrutiny and comment specific discussion papers comprehensively covering planned future expansions of Sydney’s airports, right though to ultimate operational capacity, and the concomitant effects of airport noise and toxic transport emissions on human health and well being.

Mr Anderson—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1)&(2) The Federal Government established the Sydney Airport Community Forum (SACF) in July 1996 as part of its commitment to addressing the noise impacts from Sydney Airport in consultation with affected residents.

(3) For Sydney Airport, the Master Plan will assess environmental issues that are reasonably expected to be associated with the implementation of the Master Plan.

Sydney (Kingsford Smith) Airport: Sale
(Question No. 29)

Mr Murphy asked the Minister for Transport and Regional Services, upon notice, on 13 February 2002:

(1) Further to the answer to part (2) of question No. 2878 (Hansard, 25 September 2001, page 31237), what policy or other criterion has driven his decision to direct the Airports Division of his Department to have a major, time-critical responsibility to answer, in detail, questions from prospective buyers in relation to aspects of the Airports regulatory regime.

(2) Further to the answer to parts (3), (4), (5) and (6) of question No. 2878, was it he or the Airports Division that recommended to postpone the sale of Sydney Airport until the first half of 2002.

(3) What policy criteria are being used in the decision to postpone the sale of Sydney Airport.

(4) Did he obtain advice from the Division in determining the time frame for the postponement; if so, (a) what was that advice and (b) will he furnish a copy of that advice to the House; if so, when.

(5) Is the advice predicated on financial criteria, including the collapse of Ansett Australia, or were environmental considerations taken into account when determining the alternative time frame; if so, what were those environmental considerations.

Mr Anderson—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) The establishment of priorities within my Department for responding to questions from prospective buyers of Sydney Airport was guided by the process and timetable that had been prepared by the then Office of Asset Sales and Commercial Support for completion of the sale within the timeframe announced by the Government in March 2001.

(2) The Minister for Finance and Administration announced the Government’s decision to defer the sale of Sydney Airport on 24 September 2001. The Government’s decision followed advice from its advisers that the Government’s sale objectives could not be satisfactorily met in the current timeframe.

(3) The Government’s sale objectives.

(4) My Department provided me with advice on issues relating to the timing of the sale to facilitate a possible discussion with the Minister for Finance and Administration who had primary responsi-
bility for the sale process. (a) and (b) I do not make it a practice to disclose advice provided to me by my Department.

(5) See answer to (4) (a) and (b).

Sydney (Kingsford Smith) Airport: Sale (Question No. 30)

Mr Murphy asked the Minister for Transport and Regional Services, upon notice, on 13 February 2002:

(1) Further to the answer to parts (1) and (4) of question No. 2878 (Hansard, 25 September 2001, page 31237), can he clarify how, on the one hand, he has written to the Speaker of the House in his letter dated 8 August 2001, that the Division has had a major, time-critical responsibility to answer, in detail, questions from prospective buyers in relation to aspects of the Airports regulatory regime, whilst in his answer to part (4) he said he did not give the Airport Division specific instructions on this matter.

(2) Upon what basis does this time-critical responsibility rest.

(3) What is time-critical about this responsibility.

Mr Anderson—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1), (2) and (3) The establishment of priorities within my Department for responding to questions from prospective buyers of Sydney Airport was guided by the process and timetable that had been prepared by the then Office of Asset Sales and Commercial Support for completion of the sale within the time-frame announced by the Government in March 2001.

Sydney (Kingsford Smith) Airport: Sale (Question No. 31)

Mr Murphy asked the Minister for Transport and Regional Services, upon notice, on 13 February 2002:

(1) Further to the answer to part (2) of question No. 2715 (Hansard, 17 September 2001, page 30791), can he identify where the proceeds from the sale of Sydney Airport will be placed.

(2) Will he commit the proceeds from the sale of Sydney Airport to a dedicated fund for the purposes of construction of Sydney West Airport; if not, why not.

(3) Can he estimate the cost of construction of Sydney West Airport at Badgerys Creek, capable of handling the volume of passenger movements as prescribed in the Rust PPK Environment and Infrastructure Environmental Impact Statement, dated 1997.

(4) In light of his answer to part (3) of question No. 2715, the Coalitions 1996 Aviation Policy and speeches made by the then Minister for Transport and Regional Services, is it the intention of the Government to build Sydney West Airport; if so, (a) when will it be built, (b) from where will the money come to build it and (c) in light of his answer to part (1) of question No. 2715, can no funds be expected from the prospective airport lessee company of Sydney Airport to contribute to Sydney West Airport.

(5) If the first right of refusal is granted to the prospective airport lessee company and the sale proceeds of Sydney Airport are dissipated prior to any decision to build Sydney West Airport, will a future Commonwealth Government be able to raise the money necessary to build Sydney West Airport.

(6) If so, will Sydney West Airport not be capable of being built due to financial incapacity; if not, from where will the money to build Sydney West Airport come.

Mr Anderson—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) The proceeds of the sale of Sydney Airport will be applied to reduce Commonwealth debt. The Government has determined that this is the most responsible approach to fiscal management.

(2) No. See answer (1) above.

(3) The Environmental Impact Statement for the Second Sydney Airport Proposal at Badgerys Creek contained indicative cost estimates for different stages of development for three alternative airport design options.
(4) The Government announced in December 2000 that it would be premature to build a second major airport for Sydney. The Government will further review Sydney’s airport needs in 2005. (a) It will be a matter for the Federal Government of the day to decide if and when a second major airport for Sydney is needed. (b) and (c) The new owner of Sydney Airport will be given the first right of refusal by the Commonwealth to build and operate any second major airport within 100 kilometres of the Sydney Central Business District. Funding arrangements for airport development would be a matter for negotiation between the Commonwealth, the lessee of Sydney Airport and any other relevant stakeholders. A future Government may wish to consider a range of funding options should it decide to provide incentives towards the development of the new airport.

(5) and (6) See answer (4)(b) and (c) above.

Transport: Vehicle Airbags
(Question No. 34)

Mr Murphy asked the Minister for Transport and Regional Services, upon notice, on 13 March 2002:
Will he introduce legislation to make the fitting of air bags compulsory in all new motor vehicles for both the driver and front passenger; if so, when; if not, why not.

Mr Anderson—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:
No.
The Australian Design Rules (ADRs) for road vehicles set minimum standards that must be passed in crash tests. These standards may be met either with or without air bags. However, most vehicle manufacturers choose to include driver and front passenger air bags as standard equipment on new vehicles supplied to the market in Australia.

Sydney (Kingsford Smith) Airport: Long Term Operating Plan
(Question No. 35)

Mr Murphy asked the Minister for Transport and Regional Services, upon notice, on 13 February 2002:
Does the Long Term Operating Plan (LTOP) envisage a review of its operation since it was first introduced; if so, when; if not, why not.

Mr Anderson—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:
There is no intention, at this time, to review the Long Term Operating Plan for Sydney Airport. The Government remains committed to maintaining the current noise sharing arrangements.

Superannuation Funds
(Question No. 38)

Mr Murphy asked the Treasurer, upon notice, on 13 February 2002:
(1) Has he seen an article titled Toothless tiger written by Michael Heffernan and reported in The Pro Traders Advice segment of The Sunday Telegraph of 6 May 2001. y
(2) Is the Australian Prudential Regulation Authority confident of the security and management of the funds of the Commonwealth Superannuation Scheme and Public Sector Superannuation Scheme.

Mr Costello—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:
(1) No.
(2) The Commonwealth Superannuation Scheme (CSS) and the Public Sector Superannuation Scheme (PSSS) are public sector funds and are therefore not required to be regulated. However, both funds have elected to be regulated by the Australian Prudential Regulation Authority (APRA) under the Superannuation Industry (Supervision) Act 1993 (the SIS Act).
APRA has confirmed that the CSS and the PSSS are complying funds for the purposes of the SIS Act. APRA advises that nothing has come to its attention to indicate that member benefits are unlikely to be paid.
Mr Murphy asked the Minister representing the Minister for Finance and Administration, upon notice, on 22 August 2001:

Further to the answer to question No. 2621 (Hansard, 20 August 2001, page 29765), (a) is he the Minister charged with the responsibility for the sale of Sydney and other Sydney basin airports and (b) why was the question transferred to the Minister for Transport and Regional Services for a reply.

Mr Costello—The Minister for Finance and Administration has provided the following answer to the honourable member’s question:

(a) Yes.
(b) The issues raised by Mr Murphy in question No. 2621 (Hansard, 20 August 2001, page 29765) relate to provisions of the Airports Act 1996 and its administration. The Minister for Transport and Regional Services is responsible for administering the Act, and it was therefore appropriate to refer the question to him.

Aviation: Sydney (Kingsford Smith) Airport

(1) Has his attention been drawn to an Australian Financial Review article, dated 25-26 August 2001 titled “Airport gears for $5bn take-off”.

(2) Is he able to say whether groups bidding for the purchase of the lease of Sydney Airport include (a) the AMP and Hastings’ Gateway Group, (b) Macquarie Bank and (c) ABN Amro, either alone or as part of the Connect Consortium consisting of ABN Amro, Egis Group, Schiphol Group and Fraport.

(3) Is he able to say whether (a) any of the bidders referred to in part (2) are no longer bidders, (b) any other bidders have now submitted their bids and (c) he knows of any other bids likely to be submitted before the closing date of bids.

(4) What criteria will be used in assessing who will be the successful bidder.

(5) Will the decision be based upon (a) price alone, (b) conformance with ecological/environmental and economic constraints or (c) ecological/environmental factors alone and the bidder who seeks to assist in the fulfilment of the Government’s declared economic and social goals of a fully implemented Long Term Operating Plan (LTOP) and commence construction of Sydney West Airport immediately.

(6) If the decision will be based on conformance with ecological/environmental and economic constraints, will the successful bidder be one who (a) agrees to abide by the fully implemented LTOP and commence construction of Sydney West Airport at Badgerys Creek immediately and (b) declares that they will honour the promises made to the public that Sydney Airport would not be sold until a genuine environmental impact statement (EIS) was completed for a second airport at Sydney.

(7) Has any bidder expressly or impliedly declared in their bid their intention whether or not to construct Sydney West Airport; if so, who is that bidder and what is their declared intention.

(8) Will he announce if any bidder for the lease of Sydney Airport declares an intention to not construct Sydney West Airport within an acceptable prescribed time, or at all, based on the Pareto constraints indicated in the 1995 EIS by PPK Environment and Infrastructure, for the Second Sydney Airport Proposal, namely when passenger movements reach or exceed 20 million per year.

(9) Is he able to say whether in 1999-2000, Sydney Airport had 23 million passenger movements, and has thus exceeded its Pareto optimum ecologically sustainable limit; if not, why not.

(10) What ethic is driving the tender and sale process of Sydney Airport, including the primary decision to sell Sydney Airport.

(11) Upon what ethical basis and what moral reasoning are Bankstown, Hoxton Park and Camden Airports being sold separately from Sydney Airport.
(12) Upon what ethical basis and what moral reasoning is Sydney Airport being sold with first right of refusal in the hands of the successful bidder to construct Sydney West Airport.

(13) Is Sydney Airport being sold with first right of refusal by the successful bidder to not construct Sydney West Airport in order to maximise the sale price of Sydney Airport by not encumbering the sale to the successful bidder in locking that bidder into an expensive contractual obligation to construct Sydney West Airport.

(14) Is Sydney Airport being sold separately from Bankstown, Hoxton Park and Camden Airports to sterilise the sale of Sydney Airport by emphasising it as the jewel in the crown of Australia’s international gateway airports and maximise the sale price alone.

(15) Is the sole or substantial ethic directing the decisions made by the Government utilitarian in that it seeks to maximise utility of the greatest number of successful bidders’ shareholders whilst denying both the Government’s declared promises to the general public not to sell Sydney Airport until (a) Sydney Airport’s aircraft noise problems have been solved and (b) a genuine environmental impact statement for the Second Sydney Airport has been undertaken.

(16) How are environmental and public interest factors included in the tender process.

(17) Will bidders be expected to fulfil the Government’s declared social and economic goals, including (a) full implementation of the LTOP, (b) immediate commencement of construction of Sydney West Airport and (c) maintenance of Commonwealth statute law proscribing monopolistic control of global and strategic assets, including Australia’s international and regional airports.

(18) Is the Government’s policy on this sale process driven by the principles of globalisation.

(19) What policy rationale, other than maximising profit, governs the sale process of Sydney Airport to these banks, foreign consortia and globalised superannuation funds.

(20) Has the tender process erred in failing to adequately protect the public interest and public morality of the sale process.

(21) What will be the financial implications in terms of rent and other overheads upon the Australian taxpayer in light of the permanent loss of strategic assets such as Australia’s international airports.

(22) Is he familiar with the principles of the Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI) and the term ‘anarcho-capitalism’.

(23) Will the right of first refusal to construct Sydney West Airport in the hands of the successful bidder effectively waive any hope for Sydney Airport aircraft noise-affected residents seeking relief from aircraft noise during the lease period of up to 50 years.

(24) If not, how will Sydney Airport aircraft noise-affected residents have aircraft noise managed in line with the Coalition Government’s declared 1996 aviation policy.

(25) Is the granting of first right of refusal to the successful bidder of Sydney Airport an anarcho-capitalist policy of non-regulation by denying this and successive Commonwealth Governments the legal power to construct Sydney West Airport because the Government is contractually and legally bound to the terms of the lease and hence faces potential litigation by the successful bidder should a successive Commonwealth Government attempt to construct Sydney West Airport.

(26) Is the granting of first right of refusal to the successful bidder of Sydney Airport an MAI-like philosophy of ensuring the free flow of capital across sovereign borders whilst placing no weight on pre-existing prescribed Commonwealth Government social and economic goals, including the full implementation of the LTOP, construction and completion of Sydney West Airport and fulfilment of declared Coalition aviation policy.

Mr Costello—The Minister for Finance and Administration has provided the following answer to the honourable member’s question:

(1) Yes.

(2) and (3) No. The Commonwealth does not comment on bidders as it may be disadvantageous to the Commonwealth’s interests.

(4) The Commonwealth will assess conforming bids against the objectives for the sale of Sydney (Kingsford-Smith) Airport, which are as follows:

- Optimise sale proceeds within the context of the broader Government sales and policy objectives.
• Minimise the Commonwealth’s exposure to residual risks and liabilities.
• Ensure that the airport lessees have the necessary financial and managerial capabilities to operate and provide timely investment in environmentally appropriate aviation infrastructure at Sydney (Kingsford-Smith) Airport.
• Ensure the sale outcome is consistent with relevant airport legislative, regulatory and policy requirements, including environmental, foreign investment, competition, access and pricing policies.
• Ensure fair and equitable treatment of employees of Sydney Airports Corporation including the preservation of accrued entitlements.
• Ensure the airport lessees demonstrate a commitment to the effective development of airport services, consistent with Australia’s international obligations.

(5) The decision will be based on assessments made against the sale objectives outlined above.
(6) See answer to Question 5.
(7) The Commonwealth does not comment on bids. However Mr Murphy should note that due to the September 2001 deferral of the sale process no bids have been received, and the deadline for bid submission under the recommenced Sale Process has not yet been determined.
(8) The successful purchaser will be offered a first right of refusal by the Commonwealth to build and operate any second major airport within 100 kilometres of the Sydney CBD. The Government will review Sydney’s airspace needs in 2005.
(9) There were more than 23 million passenger movements at Sydney Airport in 1999-2000. The Government has concluded that Sydney Airport will be able to cope with air traffic demand until the end of the decade.
(10) Experience from the earlier airport divestment programs clearly demonstrates that privatising Australia’s airports has increased their efficiency by improving the way in which they are managed, fostering a more commercial culture and encouraging their interaction with local stakeholders. The sale of Sydney Airport will allow Australia’s largest airport to similarly benefit from privatisation.
(11) The Government’s decision to privatise Bankstown, Hoxton Park and Camden Airport separately from Sydney Airport is intended to encourage competition between Bankstown Airport and Sydney Airport.
(12) Giving the new owner of Sydney Airport the first right of refusal by the Commonwealth to build and operate any second major airport within 100 kilometres of the Sydney Central Business District is intended to provide an appropriate degree of commercial certainty to the new owner in regard to the possible future development of new airport capacity in the Sydney region. It will also facilitate future compliance with the provisions in the Airports Act 1996 dealing with the issue of common ownership of Sydney Airport and Sydney West Airport.
(13) The new owner will have a first right of refusal to build and operate a second major airport in the Sydney basin. The Government has concluded that it would be premature to build a second major airport and that Sydney Airport will be able to cope with increasing air traffic until the end of the decade.
(14) No.
(15) No.
(16) Bids will be evaluated against the sale objectives detailed in (4) above, which includes ensuring the sale outcome is consistent with relevant airport legislative, regulatory and policy requirements, including environmental, foreign investment, competition, access and pricing policies.
(17) (a) Air Services Australia is responsible for the implementing LTOP. The transfer of airport ownership does not alter compliance requirements.
(b) The Government has concluded that, at this time, it is premature to build a second major airport for Sydney.
(c) The Airports Act has relevant ownership provisions to address cross ownership issues. Additionally the Trade Practices Act and the Prices Surveillance Act provide the means of regulating leased federal airports with respect to access and price regulation.

(18) No.
(19) See (10) above.
(20) No.
(21) Sydney Airport will be sold by way of a 100% trade sale, with the successful Bidder acquiring all the shares in Sydney Airports Corporation Limited (SACL), the company that holds the Airport Lease for Sydney Airport. The proceeds of the sale will be used to reduce Commonwealth debt, resulting in substantial savings in Public Debt Interest Payments annually. These savings are offset to some extent as a result of the Commonwealth no longer receiving the benefit of dividend payments from SACL. Also see response to question 10.

(22) Yes.
(23) No. The Long Term Operating Plan (LTOP) which together with the jet curfew which prevents jet aircraft from arriving or departing between 11pm and 6am, and the movement cap that limits total take-off and landings at KSA to 80 per hour, enable aircraft noise to be fairly shared across Sydney. All these safeguards will remain in place following the sale of KSA.

(24) The Government has addressed the aircraft noise issue by providing for a substantially more equitable sharing of noise compared with the arrangements in place prior to March 1996 and by implementing the aircraft noise insulation program.

(25) The sale arrangements for Sydney Airport will not prevent the development of a second major airport for Sydney if a future Federal Government decided that such development should proceed.

(26) No.

Aviation: Sydney (Kingsford Smith) Airport
(Question No. 60)

Mr Murphy asked the Minister representing the Minister for Finance and Administration, upon notice, on 30 August 2001:

(1) Has he seen an article by Alan Mitchell, Economics Editor, on page 55 of the Australian Financial Review, 29 August 2001, titled “Price Vacuum Sells Airport Cheap” in which Mr Mitchell reports that the Government looks like selling Sydney Airport before it makes a decision on the future of the airport’s price regulation.

(2) Will Sydney Airport be sold before the Government makes a decision on the future of the airport’s price regulation; if so, why.

Mr Costello—The Minister for Finance and Administration has provided the following answer to the honourable member’s question:

(1) Yes.
(2) The Government announced on 24 September that it decided to defer the sale of Sydney Airport until early 2002. A decision to recommence the sale process was taken on 11 March 2002, with the detailed timetable to be determined by the Federal Government’s commitment to securing the best possible outcome for Australian taxpayers.

The Productivity Commission delivered its final Report into Price Regulation of Airport Services in January 2002. The Government will consider the recommendations of this Report before determining the future price regulation of airport services.

Air Safety and Cabin Air Quality Report: Government Response
(Question No. 78)

Mr McClelland asked the Minister for Transport and Regional Services, upon notice, on 13 February 2002:

When will the Government respond to the Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee report on Air Safety and Cabin Air Quality in the BAE 146 Aircraft, dated October 2000.

Mr Anderson—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:
Action to table the Government’s final response will be progressed as quickly as possible. A final consolidated response has been sent to the Prime Minister seeking agreement to tabling at the earliest possible opportunity.

Final clearance and tabling of the Government’s response was delayed as a result of the Federal election and to allow for the consideration of recently completed international studies. Accordingly, the response has been updated to ensure it represents a satisfactory consideration of the Senate Committee’s recommendations.

Aviation: Aircraft Maintenance
(Question No. 80)

Mr McClelland asked the Minister for Transport and Regional Services, upon notice, on 13 March 2002:

(1) Will the Government introduce regulations under the Civil Aviation Act specifying: (a) a specific national standard for checking and monitoring the engine seals and air quality in all passenger commercial jet aircraft, (b) maintenance procedures, including specific maintenance procedures for ageing aircraft, (c) specific appropriate maintenance and operational procedures for BAe 146 which pay particular attention to the need to ensure aircraft are withdrawn from operational flying and service to ensure any operating faults resulting in oil leaks, fumes or smoke are immediately repaired, (d) that incident reports should now be specifically designed so as to reflect the history of the cabin air problem that has been encountered on the BAe 146 aircraft and (e) air quality monitoring and compulsory reporting guidelines for all passenger jet aircraft operations.

(2) Why has the Civil Aviation Safety Authority issued an Airworthiness Directive relating to the non-reporting and issue of air quality defects for the BAe 146 when the defect reporting and rectification procedures are part of the legislation.

Mr Anderson—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) (a) In October 2000 the Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee tabled its report on Air Safety and Cabin Air Quality in the BAe 146 Aircraft to Parliament with eight recommendations.

The issues raised have been addressed in the Government’s response to the Committee’s report.

Action to table the Government’s final response will be progressed as quickly as possible. A final consolidated response has recently been sent to the Prime Minister seeking agreement to tabling at the earliest possible opportunity.

Final clearance and tabling of the Government’s response was delayed as a result of the Federal election and to allow for the consideration of recently completed international studies. Accordingly, the response has been updated to ensure it represents a satisfactory consideration of the Senate Committee’s recommendations.

(b) The Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA) already requires additional maintenance for ageing aircraft where routine maintenance may not be sufficient to detect all potential problems.

(c) (to (e) See response to (1)(a) above.

(2) CASA mandated a Mandatory Inspection Service Bulletin distributed by BAE Systems by issuing an Australian Airworthiness Directive (AD), which follows recommendations from the United Kingdom. The AD is effective 3 April 2001 and requires all operators to undertake inspections of oil contamination at intervals not to exceed 500 flights.

Aviation: Air Safety and Cabin Air Quality
(Question No. 81)

Mr McClelland asked the Minister for Transport and Regional Services, upon notice, on 13 March 2002:

Has the Civil Aviation Safety Authority undertaken liaison with airline operators to develop a standardised compulsory monitoring program which provides for testing cabin aircraft during fume events.

Mr Anderson—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:
In October 2000 the Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee tabled its report on Air Safety and Cabin Air Quality in the BAe 146 Aircraft to Parliament with eight recommendations.

The issues raised have been addressed in the Government’s response to the Committee’s report. Action to table the Government’s final response will be progressed as quickly as possible. A final consolidated response has recently been sent to the Prime Minister seeking agreement to tabling at the earliest possible opportunity.

Final clearance and tabling of the Government’s response was delayed as a result of the Federal election and to allow for the consideration of recently completed international studies. Accordingly, the response has been updated to ensure it represents a satisfactory consideration of the Senate Committee’s recommendations.

Aviation: Air Safety and Cabin Air Quality
(Question No. 82)

Mr McClelland asked the Minister for Transport and Regional Services, upon notice, on 13 February 2002:

Has he undertaken any liaison with State Ministers with a view to establishing a procedure to inquire into unsuccessful or inordinately delayed workers’ compensation cases arising from air crew being exposed to noxious fumes on board Australian passenger jet aircraft; if so, what communications has he had with a view to establishing such a procedure.

Mr Anderson—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

In October 2000 the Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee tabled its report on Air Safety and Cabin Air Quality in the BAe 146 Aircraft to Parliament with eight recommendations.

The issues raised have been addressed in the Government’s response to the Committee’s report. Action to table the Government’s final response will be progressed as quickly as possible. A final consolidated response has recently been sent to the Prime Minister seeking agreement to tabling at the earliest possible opportunity.

Final clearance and tabling of the Government’s response was delayed as a result of the Federal election and to allow for the consideration of recently completed international studies. Accordingly, the response has been updated to ensure it represents a satisfactory consideration of the Senate Committee’s recommendations.

Aviation: Air Safety and Cabin Air Quality
(Question No. 83)

Mr McClelland asked the Minister for Transport and Regional Services, upon notice, on 13 March 2002:

Has the Civil Aviation Safety Authority taken steps to ensure that commercial aircraft operators fit appropriate high-grade air filters on all commercial airlines flying in Australia.

Mr Anderson—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

In October 2000 the Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee tabled its report on Air Safety and Cabin Air Quality in the BAe 146 Aircraft to Parliament with eight recommendations.

The issues raised have been addressed in the Government response to the Committee’s report. Action to table the Government’s final response will be progressed as quickly as possible. A final consolidated response has recently been sent to the Prime Minister seeking agreement to tabling at the earliest possible opportunity.

Final clearance and tabling of the Government’s response was delayed as a result of the Federal election and to allow for the consideration of recently completed international studies. Accordingly, the response has been updated to ensure it represents a satisfactory consideration of the Senate Committee’s recommendations.
The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) Twelve residences and one school were included in the Programme following consideration of the Year 2000 Australian Noise Exposure Index (ANEI) for the airport.

(2) Yes. Initially 500 residences to the west of the airport were included in the Programme in August 1996.

In May 1997 substantial changes were made to the scope of the Programme based on noise exposure contours associated with the Long Term Operating Plan. A further 500 residences to the west of the airport and 180 residences to the east were included in the Programme and the Government decided that invitations should not be issued to previously identified residences north of Stanmore Road. A further 7 schools, 8 childcare centres, 5 nursing homes/hostels and 22 churches became eligible. The issue of invitations to 2 hospitals, 6 nursing homes/hostels and 18 churches to the north of the airport was suspended.

In May 1999 216 residences, 8 churches and one nursing home located to the north of the airport were included in the Programme following consideration of the ANEI for 1998.

In January 2000 a further 630 residences in Stanmore and Petersham were included based on noise exposure contours reflecting the 1998 ANEI adjusted for the effects of terrain.

In August 2001 2 churches and one school were included in the Programme following consideration of the Year 2000 ANEI for the airport.

The Tullamarine Freeway and the Calder Highway are state roads and responsibility for their planning rests with the Victorian Government.

(2) Issues related to the development of a new interchange between the Tullamarine Freeway and the Calder Highway were discussed between the Victorian Government, the Commonwealth and bidders for the Airport. A provision was subsequently included in the sale agreement for negotiations to take place between the new owner of Essendon Airport Limited and the Victorian Government when the latter is ready to seek a realignment of the freeway.

The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) The Tullamarine Freeway and the Calder Highway are state roads and responsibility for their planning rests with the Victorian Government.

(2) Issues related to the development of a new interchange between the Tullamarine Freeway and the Calder Highway were discussed between the Victorian Government, the Commonwealth and bidders for the Airport. A provision was subsequently included in the sale agreement for negotiations to take place between the new owner of Essendon Airport Limited and the Victorian Government when the latter is ready to seek a realignment of the freeway.

The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) What was the (a) total sum expended by the Commonwealth and (b) sum spent by each Department with respect to celebrating the Centenary of Federation.
(2) What projects were undertaken with the Government’s $1 billion Federation Fund and what sum was allocated to each project.

(3) What projects were undertaken with the $9 million allocated for history and education and what sum was allocated to each project.

(4) How was the $12 million allocated for the work of the National Council and Secretariat expended.

(5) What financial contribution was made by corporate Australia to the Centenary celebrations, including details of corporate sponsorship.

Mr McGauran—The Minister for the Arts and Sport has provided the following answer to the honourable member’s question:

(1) (a) Funds allocated through the Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts for the programs and activities of the National Council for the Centenary of Federation and support for the centenary year celebrations amounted to $58.6 million.

(b) I am not prepared to authorise the committal of the considerable human resources needed for the searching of records to obtain information to answer this question.

(2) The Federation Fund program consists of three components: the Federation Fund Major Projects (MFF) program; the Federation Cultural and Heritage Projects (FCHP) program; and the Federation Community Projects (FCP) program.

Copies of the lists of grants approved under the Federation Fund Major Projects program and the Federation Cultural and Heritage Projects program have been provided separately to the honourable member.

The Federation Community Projects program provided funding for around 1,000 small projects across the country. The $29.81 million program provided up to $200,000 in grants to all Federal electorates and $10,000 to Norfolk Island.

(3) A copy of a list of grants approved under the History and Education Program has been provided separately to the honourable member.

(4) The funds allocated for the work of the National Council was spent over a period of four years. They were spent on salaries and administrative expenses for the Secretariat (which at its peak was 30 staff); the sitting fees and travelling allowances of the National Council members (based on rates determined by the Remuneration Tribunal); and the usual costs of the meetings and other business of the Council and the Secretariat.

(5) Several Australian organisations gave generous financial support for the Centenary. Coles Myer Ltd became the National Centenary Patron. Additional sponsorship and support came from AMP, BHP Billiton and the Foundation for Young Australians. A total of $4.2 million was raised from these sources. Other businesses also sponsored Centenary activities at State, Territory and local levels.

FEDERATION CULTURAL & HERITAGE PPROJECTS (FCHP)—Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROJECT</th>
<th>GRANT $M</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Department of Communications, Information Technology &amp; the Arts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New South Wales</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wagga Wagga Riverina Amphitheatre</td>
<td>1.535</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Byron Bay Community Centre</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gilgandra Centennial Celebration of Federation</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lady Denman Ferry Conservation</td>
<td>1.146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hazelhurst Community and Regional Arts Gallery</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Wool Museum Geelong</td>
<td>0.630</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heide Restoration</td>
<td>2.500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beechworth Historic Towns Heritage Precinct</td>
<td>1.060</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bundoora Homestead</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sir John Quick Federation Project</td>
<td>1.250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federation Tapestry</td>
<td>1.600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PROJECT</td>
<td>GRANT $M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frankston Community Arts Centre</td>
<td>1.500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maroondah Heritage Estate</td>
<td>2.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queensland</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maryborough Cultural Centre</td>
<td>2.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Oil &amp; Gas Museum Roma</td>
<td>0.900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Townsville Maritime Museum</td>
<td>0.936</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James Cook Museum Cooktown</td>
<td>2.300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Australia</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balgo Hills Arts Centre</td>
<td>0.500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kojonup Federation Park Complex</td>
<td>0.650</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dalgety House, Port Hedland</td>
<td>0.295</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Australia</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glenelg Town Hall conservation</td>
<td>1.500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Port Lincoln Civic Hall</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commonwealth Railways Museum</td>
<td>0.560</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warriparinga Interpretive Centre</td>
<td>1.450</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mawson Collection</td>
<td>0.300</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tasmania</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Devonport Cultural Centre</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Launceston Railway Workshop</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Territory</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Araluen Centre, Alice Springs</td>
<td>2.300</td>
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<tr>
<td>Department of Heritage &amp; the Environment (DOEH)</td>
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<tr>
<td>New South Wales</td>
<td>0.686</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rookwood Cemetery Restoration</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sulman building Uni of Sydney conservation</td>
<td>0.837</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Federation Family 9 National Trust properties</td>
<td>4.780</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great Synagogue Tower</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Bartholomews Church, Prospect</td>
<td>0.500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norman Lindsay Gallery conservation</td>
<td>1.440</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wivenhoe Villa conservation Camden</td>
<td>0.370</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lithgow Industrial Heritage Part</td>
<td>1.500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenterfield School of the Arts</td>
<td>2.750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Surf Life Saving Institute Bondi</td>
<td>0.600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Como House restoration</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polly Woodside Dry Docks Restoration</td>
<td>2.500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clunes Conservation project</td>
<td>0.548</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queensland</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commissariat Museum Brisbane</td>
<td>1.100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greenhill Fort restoration, Thursday Island</td>
<td>0.572</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greenmount Homestead Mackay</td>
<td>0.838</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naval Stores restoration Brisbane</td>
<td>1.100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palma Rosa Restoration</td>
<td>0.800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Australia</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairbridge Village redevelopment</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Norcia conservation</td>
<td>1.815</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Midland Town Hall restoration
- Grant: $0.800

### Meerilinga House restoration
- Grant: $0.471

### Golden Pipeline restoration
- Grant: $1.000

### South Australia
- **Ayers House Museum Development**: $1.260
- **Townsend House**: $0.448

### Tasmania
- **Clarendon Homestead**: $1.000
- **Woolmers Heritage & Cultural Estate**: $0.700
- **Historic Female Factory site**: $0.975
- **Tasmania School of Fine Furniture**: $0.460

### ACT
- **Tuggeranong Homestead**: $0.675
- **Conservation of Academy of Science Dome**: $0.525
- **St Andrews Church restoration**: $0.500

### MAJOR FEDERATION FUND PROJECTS—Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROJECT</th>
<th>GRANT $m</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National Museum of Australia</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queensland Heritage Trails Network</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Gallery of Victoria</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victorian Regional Galleries</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra Concert Hall</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prospectors/Miners Hall of Fame</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gunnedah Performing Arts Centre</td>
<td>1.625</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamworth Entertainment Centre</td>
<td>1.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australian Federation Centre</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Centre for Christianity &amp; Culture</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australian Centre for the Moving Image</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Institute for the Dramatic Arts</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shearers’ Hall of Fame</td>
<td>4.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Line of Lode</td>
<td>4.625</td>
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<tr>
<td>Australian Museum of Flight</td>
<td>1.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Commonwealth Technology Port</td>
<td>22.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holsworthy Shooting Range</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alice Springs to Darwin railway</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Murray River Bridges</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caboolture Motorway</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abt Railway</td>
<td>20.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beaudesert railway</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Fast Train (proving up)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Department of Transport & Regional Services
- **Jervoise Bay Infrastructure** | $80
- **Grahame Park** | $12
- **Bendigo & Ballarat sports facilities** | $1.987
- **Walhalla Goldfields Railway** | $1
- **Manuka Oval** | $1

(NB: Grahame Park, Manuka Oval, Bendigo & Ballarat sports facilities completed when portfolio included sport)
Department of Environment & Heritage
Sydney Harbour Federation Trust (decontamination of Cockatoo Is & Trust activities) 46
St Andrew’s Cathedral 5
Centennial & Moore Parks 10
Oddfellows Hall 0.75
St Paul’s Cathedral 2.5

Department of Education, Science & Training
Victorian College of the Arts 10
National Marine Science Centre 12
Institute of Molecular Bioscience 15

Department of Defence
Sydney Harbour Federation Trust (Garden Is & transfer of Defence lands) 56
Portsea 4
Torrens Parade Ground 3
Otama submarine (relocation) 0.5

Department of Veterans’ Affairs
Australian War Memorial-ANZAC Hall 11.9
Shrine of Remembrance 5

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries & Forestry
National Wine Centre 12

Department of Finance & Administration
No 4 Treasury Place 9.8

Department of Health & Ageing
Cancer Research Centre 20

Aviation: Sydney (Kingsford Smith) Airport
(Question No. 131)

Mrs Crosio asked the Minister representing the Minister for Finance and Administration, upon notice, on 13 February 2002:

(1) Following the deference of the 17 September 2001 deadline after the terrorist attacks in New York, what date has the Minister decided as the renewed deadline for bids for the sale of Sydney (Kingsford Smith) Airport.

(2) Will the successful bidder still have first right of refusal over future development of further development at the Badgery’s Creek proposed airport site.

Mr Costello—The Minister for Finance and Administration has provided the following answer to the honourable member’s question:

(1) The Government announced the Recommencement of the Sale Process for Sydney (Kingsford Smith) Airport on 11 March 2002. The Sale Process will recommence at the preparation of the Binding Bid stage. Details of the sale timetable will be determined by the Federal Government’s commitment to securing the best possible outcome for Australian taxpayers.

(2) Yes.

Aviation: Review of Airports Act 1996
(Question No. 172)

Mr Martin Ferguson asked the Minister for Transport and Regional Services, upon notice, on 21 February 2002:
Is his Department undertaking or planning to undertake a review of the Airports Act 1996 this year; if so, (a) who is conducting the review, (b) what are the terms of reference for the review, (c) how will be consulted on the review, (d) why is the review being conducted and when will any proposals for change be made publicly available.

Mr Anderson—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:
My Department is expecting to bring forward its suggested timetable for review of the Airports Act 1996 in the near future. Good regulatory practice dictates that legislation be reviewed regularly and it is for this reason that consideration is being given to the timing and scope of a review of the Airports Act. The details of the review will be made available once I have had the opportunity to consider the matter.

Telstra: Belmont Call Centre
(Question No. 174)

Mr Wilkie asked the Minister representing the Minister for Communications, Information Technology and the Arts, upon notice, on 11 March 2002:
(1) What is the Government’s position on the sacking in February 2002 of 53 workers from a Telstra call centre in Belmont, WA.
(2) Does the Minister support Telstra’s explanation that the sackings were due to the cyclical nature of the telecommunications industry, despite the 53 workers having worked in the call centre for between 6 and 10 months.
(3) Does the Minister support Telstra’s practice of using contracted staff instead of permanent employees, given that the 53 workers performed the same duties as permanent employees but are not entitled to holiday pay, sick pay or redundancy payments.
(4) Has Telstra treated the workers fairly, given that they received less than one week’s notice, will receive no redundancy or other benefits and had worked at the call centre for between 6 and 10 months.

Mr McGauran—The Minister for Communications, Information Technology and the Arts, on advice from Telstra, has provided the following answer to the honourable member’s question:
(1) While Telstra is partially Government-owned, Telstra has been an independent corporation since 1992. Telstra’s Board and Management are responsible for the day to day running of the company’s operations. The Government’s role is to establish the legislative framework within which all telecommunications service providers (including Telstra) must operate. The Government does not believe it should tell management how to run the company. Decisions about how the company carries on its staffing decisions belong rightfully with the Board. Telstra has advised that as part of its employment practices, it engages contractors to meet demands for its customers during peak periods.
(2) Telstra has advised that the 53 contractors were engaged by Telstra to meet a substantial increase in enquiries to the call centre resulting from the introduction of Mobile Number Portability and a number of marketing campaigns associated with this and other mobile telephone initiatives. Telstra has also advised that there were no sackings and that all of the contractors engaged were fully aware of the terms of their contracts.
(3) See answer to part (1).
(4) Telstra has advised that the 53 contractors engaged received an additional 15% on the hourly rate to compensate for holiday pay and sick pay. This is consistent with the relevant awards and practices. Telstra has also indicated that many contractors choose this type of work in preference to full time employment.

Stirling Electorate: General Practitioners
(Question No. 181)

Ms Jann McFarlane asked the Minister representing the Minister for Health and Ageing, upon notice, on 11 March 2002:
(1) How many general practitioners practise in the electoral division of Stirling, and of these, how many bulk bill.

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(2) Of these general practitioners who bulk bill, what percentage of their patients and services do they actually bulk bill.

(3) Has the number of services being bulk billed declined in the electoral division of Stirling since 1 September 2000; if so, by how many and what percentage.


Mr Andrews—The Minister for Health and Ageing has provided the following answer to the honourable member’s question:

(1) In 2000-2001, 151 general practitioners had a major practice postcode (determined from activity in the June quarter) in the electoral division of Stirling. Of these, 147 practitioners bulk billed at least one service in 2000-2001.

(2) In 2000-2001, 84.3 per cent of services rendered by general practitioners in the electoral division of Stirling (major practice postcode) were bulk billed. Statistics are not readily available on the percentage of patients who were bulk billed, since some patients from electoral divisions other than Stirling may have had a bulk billed service in Stirling. Similarly, some patients with an enrolment postcode within Stirling, may have had services outside the electoral Division of Stirling.

(3) In the 6 months ending September 2000, 612,408 services provided by all practitioners (not just general practitioners) in the electoral division of Stirling were bulk billed. In the 6 months ending September 2001, 607,662 services were bulk billed, a decrease of 0.8 per cent, on the 6 months ending September 2000.

(4) The number of general practitioners with a major practice postcode (determined from activity in the June quarter) in the electoral division of Stirling and who bulk billed at least one service in the financial years in question, was as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number who bulk billed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1996-97</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997-98</td>
<td>159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998-99</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999-2000</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000-2001</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes

The above statistics relate to providers of services in the regions in question for which benefits were processed by the Health Insurance Commission in the respective years.

In the above statistics, all practitioners whose predominant Schedule fee income in the June quarter of the respective years, was from unreferred attendances, were considered to be general practitioners.

To the extent that some practitioners have more than one active provider number, there will be some multiple counting of practitioners.

In compiling the above statistics, each practitioner was assigned to his/her principal practice postcode in the June quarter of the respective years, having regard to service volumes. Since some postcodes overlap federal electoral boundaries, the requested statistics by servicing provider postcode were mapped to electorate using data from the Census of Population and Housing, showing the proportion of the population in each postcode in each federal electoral division.

Caution should be exercised in interpreting bulk billing statistics by electorate of provider. Since the statistics relate to general practitioner providers of at least one service for which Medicare benefits were paid and there are a large number of relatively low activity providers under Medicare, some of whom move between active and inactive etc each year, significant variations in the number of practitioners and the number of practitioners bulk billing can occur from year to year. Similarly, since the statistics on bulk billing relate to providers of at least one bulk billed service, volatility can occur in bulk billing numbers.
A ‘Reasonable and Secure’ Retirement Report: Government Response
(Question No. 188)

Mr Murphy asked the Minister representing the Minister for Finance and Administration, upon notice, on 11 March 2002:

(1) Can he say when the formal response to the report of the Senate Select Committee on Superannuation and Financial Services titled A 'Reasonable and Secure' Retirement? will be made.
(2) Has recommendation 1 of the report been examined; if so, what is the outcome; if not, why not.
(3) Will Commonwealth civilian and military superannuants have their pensions indexed to the Consumer Price Index (CPI), in the same way that Social Security pensions are indexed to the CPI or Male Total Average Weekly Earnings (MTAWE); if not, why not.
(4) What is the estimated cost to the Commonwealth if indexing for Commonwealth civilian and military superannuants was changed to the CPI/MTAWE, whichever is the higher.
(5) What will be the additional cost to unfunded liabilities if indexing is changed to CPI/MTAWE, whichever is the higher.
(6) What will be the differences when MTAWE is 1 per cent; 1.5 per cent and 2 per cent greater than the CPI.
(7) What flow on effect would there be on NSW State Superannuants if indexing for Commonwealth civilian and military superannuants was changed to the CPI/MTAWE, whichever is the higher.
(8) Did the Prime Minister’s announced 13 point program of superannuation changes include provision for allowing spouses who are members of accumulation funds to split their superannuation contributions from 1 July 2003, thus giving access to two tax-free thresholds, two reasonable benefit limits and two lump sum benefits; if so, will these changes apply to members of defined benefit schemes; if so, when; if not, why not.

Mr Costello—The Minister for Finance and Administration has provided the following answer to the honourable member’s question:

In preparing this answer, it was necessary to obtain input from the Defence and Treasury portfolios.

(1) Given the Federal Election and subsequent changes that have taken place, the Government has not yet had an opportunity to provide a comprehensive response to the recommendations made by the Committee. The Government will submit its response to the Senate at the earliest possible opportunity.

(2) and (3) These issues are discussed in the Committee’s report, and will be taken into account when the Government develops its response.

(4) The Budgetary impact will depend on the difference between CPI and the MTAWE measure used. If it is assumed that MTAWE will exceed CPI by 1 per cent, the estimated impact for the Commonwealth civilian and military schemes on the underlying cash and fiscal balance will be:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Civilian schemes</th>
<th>2001-02</th>
<th>2002-03</th>
<th>2003-04</th>
<th>2004-05</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Underlying cash</td>
<td>$m</td>
<td>$m</td>
<td>$m</td>
<td>$m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fiscal balance</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-20</td>
<td>-45</td>
<td>-70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military schemes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001-02</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Underlying cash</td>
<td>$m</td>
<td>$m</td>
<td>$m</td>
<td>$m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fiscal balance</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-345</td>
<td>-340</td>
<td>-355</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(6) and (6) The estimated impact on the unfunded liability for the Commonwealth civilian and military schemes of changing the indexation of pensions to 1%, 1.5% and 2% above CPI, is outlined in the tables below.
Civilian schemes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Change in Unfunded Liability</th>
<th>1% above CPI</th>
<th>1.5% above CPI</th>
<th>2% above CPI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$4.1 billion</td>
<td>$6.6 billion</td>
<td>$9.3 billion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: These figures are based on the unfunded liability as at 30 June 1999.

Military schemes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Change in Unfunded Liability</th>
<th>1% above CPI</th>
<th>1.5% above CPI</th>
<th>2% above CPI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$4.0 billion</td>
<td>$5.9 billion</td>
<td>$7.9 billion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: These figures are based on the current projected estimate of the unfunded liability as at 30 June 2002.

(7) This is a matter for the NSW State Government.

(8) The Government’s election commitment was to allow splitting of superannuation contributions between spouses who are members of accumulation funds. There are a number of administrative complexities in extending splitting of contributions to defined benefit funds.

The Government has committed to undertake a thorough process of consultation with stakeholders and will make a further announcement on this matter once the detailed policy design has been determined.

**Health: Tobacco Smoking-related Illness**

(Question No. 190)

Mr Murphy asked the Minister representing the Minister for Health and Ageing, upon notice, on 11 March 2002:

(1) How many people were hospitalised in Australia in each year since 1990 for treatment of a tobacco-smoking-related illness.

(2) How many hospital patient days were taken up in each of those years for treatment of patients with a tobacco-smoking-related illness.

(3) What was the estimated total cost of the treatment of those patients in each of those years.

(4) How many Australians died from a tobacco-smoking-related illness during each of those years.

(5) What was the estimated total cost of the treatment of those patients in each of those years.

(6) What percentage of total Commonwealth revenue was derived from tobacco products each year from 1990 to 2001.

(7) Is it a fact that anti-smoking advertising campaigns save money and lives.

(8) Will the Government increase funding designed to reduce the level of tobacco consumption in Australia; if not, why not; if so, by how much and when.

Mr Andrews—The Minister for Health and Ageing has provided the following answer to the honourable member’s question:

(1), (2), and (4) Statistics on tobacco-related hospitalisations, patient days, and deaths are not available for each of the years requested by the honourable member. From time to time estimates have been produced based on the proportion of cases of illness and injury that can be attributed to various risk factors, including smoking. The following figures are available from these estimates, as reported by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hospitalisations</td>
<td>98,373</td>
<td>126,414</td>
<td>134,647</td>
<td>142,525</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patient days</td>
<td>812,866</td>
<td>551,723</td>
<td>587,655</td>
<td>622,038</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deaths</td>
<td>18,920</td>
<td>19,878</td>
<td>19,441</td>
<td>19,019</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(3) The Government does not have the data needed to answer the honourable member’s question. As an indication, the total health system costs of smoking for the year 1992 have been estimated at $833 million.

(5) The Commonwealth collects tobacco revenue from locally produced and imported tobacco products (including cigarettes) via excise duty and customs duty, respectively.
In August 1997, at the unanimous request of the States, the Commonwealth announced an increase in the rate of Commonwealth excise and customs duty on tobacco, which were passed to the States as Revenue Replacement Payments (RRPs). RRPs were abolished on 1 July 2000.

The table below shows total Commonwealth tobacco revenue and excludes RRPs. Amounts shown have been rounded to the nearest $10 million.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Commonwealth tobacco (including cigarettes) revenue ($m)(a)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1420</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1810</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(a) excludes Tobacco RRPs
(b) RRPs ceased on 1 July 2000 without a reduction in the excise rate

(6) The table below shows the percentage of Commonwealth revenue derived from tobacco products (including cigarettes). The calculation excludes any revenue collected on behalf of the States.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tobacco revenue as proportion of Commonwealth revenue (%) (a)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(a) excludes Tobacco RRPs
(b) RRPs ceased on 1 July 2000 without a reduction in the excise rate

(7) Yes, inasmuch as they encourage people to quit smoking. An evaluation of the first six months of the National Tobacco Campaign showed that it achieved a 1.4% reduction in smoking prevalence, equating to health care system savings of $24 million due to lives saved and additional productive years of life. A recent study on returns on investment found that the total benefits achieved in one year (1998) from the reduction in tobacco consumption since 1970 equated to $12.3 billion, including health care savings of $0.5 billion.

(8) The Commonwealth Government continues to fund its core responsibilities in tobacco control. This funding includes appropriate media buys for the National Tobacco Campaign, on which we have spent more than $18 million since May 1997. The Minister is committed to maintaining and enhancing this activity to ensure that Australia retains its world leadership position. The level of funding allocated to this purpose in future years will depend on the Budget process and therefore on the Government’s capacity to respond to all of the various needs of the community at the time.

**Medicare: Services**

(Question No. 208)

Ms Vamvakinou asked the Minister representing the Minister for Health and Ageing, upon notice, on 12 March 2002:

1. What percentage of Medicare services by broad type of service were direct billed during (a) 1998-99, (b) 1999-2000 and (c) 2000-2001 in (i) Victoria, and (ii) the electoral division of Calwell.
2. What was the total number of Medicare services provided during (a) 1998-99, (b) 1999-2000 and (c) 2000-2001 in (i) Victoria, (ii) the electoral division of Calwell and (iii) the postcode areas of (A) 3036, (B) 3037, (C) 3038, (D) 3043, (E) 3046, (F) 3047, (G) 3048, (H) 3049, (I) 3059, (J) 3060, (K) 3061, (L) 3064, (M) 3427 and (N) 3428.
3. How many services were provided per capita during (a) 1998-99, (b) 1999-2000 and (c) 2000-2001 in (i) Victoria, (ii) the electoral division of Calwell and (iii) the postcode areas of (A) 3036, (B) 3037, (C) 3038, (D) 3043, (E) 3046, (F) 3047, (G) 3048, (H) 3049, (I) 3059, (J) 3060, (K) 3061, (L) 3064, (M) 3427 and (N) 3428.
4. What percentage of Medicare services were provided at or below the scheduled fee during (a) 1998-99, (b) 1999-2000 and (c) 2000-2001 in (i) Victoria, (ii) the electoral division of Calwell and (iii) the postcode areas of (A) 3036, (B) 3037, (C) 3038, (D) 3043, (E) 3046, (F) 3047, (G) 3048, (H) 3049, (I) 3059, (J) 3060, (K) 3061, (L) 3064, (M) 3427 and (N) 3428.
Mr Andrews—The Minister for Health and Ageing has provided the following answer to the honourable member’s question:

(1) The percentage of services direct billed during (a) 1998-99, (b) 1999-2000 and (c) 2000-2001 in (i) Victoria and (ii) the electoral division of Calwell by broad type of service was as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GP/VR attendances</td>
<td>77.6%</td>
<td>77.5%</td>
<td>75.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enhanced Primary Care</td>
<td>n.app.</td>
<td>97.3%</td>
<td>95.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other unref attendances</td>
<td>87.4%</td>
<td>86.0%</td>
<td>84.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialist attendances</td>
<td>32.5%</td>
<td>32.9%</td>
<td>31.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obstetrics</td>
<td>24.1%</td>
<td>23.8%</td>
<td>22.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anaesthetics</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
<td>12.8%</td>
<td>12.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pathology</td>
<td>78.4%</td>
<td>79.9%</td>
<td>81.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diagnostic imaging</td>
<td>62.1%</td>
<td>60.9%</td>
<td>57.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operations</td>
<td>38.7%</td>
<td>38.6%</td>
<td>35.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Optometry</td>
<td>95.7%</td>
<td>95.6%</td>
<td>95.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>45.5%</td>
<td>45.5%</td>
<td>44.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>70.6%</td>
<td>70.8%</td>
<td>69.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Electoral division of Calwell

| GP/VR attendances            | 95.5%   | 95.8%     | 94.4%     |
| Enhanced Primary Care        | n.app.  | 100.0%    | 99.3%     |
| Other unref attendances      | 99.5%   | 99.3%     | 94.0%     |
| Specialist attendances       | 69.7%   | 73.3%     | 71.4%     |
| Obstetrics                   | 66.1%   | 67.2%     | 64.8%     |
| Anaesthetics                 | 48.5%   | 36.4%     | 35.8%     |
| Pathology                    | n.a.    | n.a.      | n.a.      |
| Diagnostic imaging           | n.a.    | n.a.      | n.a.      |
| Operations                   | 80.8%   | 81.8%     | 75.8%     |
| Optometry                    | 99.8%   | 99.7%     | 99.5%     |
| Other                        | 96.0%   | 96.6%     | 94.7%     |
| Total                        | 95.2%   | 95.0%     | 92.3%     |

n.app – not applicable; items new to Medicare Benefits Schedule in 1999-00
n.a. – not available due to possible provider confidentiality considerations; rates are included in totals for the respective years.

(2) The total number of Medicare services provided during (a) 1998-99, (b) 1999-2000 and (c) 2000-2001 in (Victoria), (ii) the electoral division of Calwell and (iii) the nominated postcode areas was as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td>52,092,315</td>
<td>53,288,151</td>
<td>53,989,264</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electoral division of Calwell</td>
<td>946,434</td>
<td>982,862</td>
<td>975,545</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nominated postcodes</td>
<td>1,264,816</td>
<td>1,300,336</td>
<td>1,291,811</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(3) The number of Medicare services provided per capita during (a) 1998-99, (b) 1999-2000 and (c) 2000-2001 in (Victoria), (ii) the electoral division of Calwell and (iii) the nominated postcode areas was as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
<td>11.2%</td>
<td>11.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electoral division of Calwell</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nominated postcodes</td>
<td>6.0%</td>
<td>6.1%</td>
<td>6.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(4) The percentage of Medicare services provided at or below the Scheduled fee during (a) 1998-99, (b) 1999-2000 and (c) 2000-2001 in (Victoria), (ii) the electoral division of Calwell and (iii) the nominated postcode areas was as follows:
Representatives 2865

Thursday, 30 May 2002

% of Medicare services provided at or below the Scheduled fee

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td>81.5</td>
<td>80.9</td>
<td>79.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electoral division of Calwell</td>
<td>95.7</td>
<td>95.8</td>
<td>93.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nominated postcodes</td>
<td>95.6</td>
<td>95.8</td>
<td>93.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes

The above statistics relate to services provided on a ‘fee-for-service’ basis, in the nominated regions, for which Medicare benefits were processed by the Health Insurance Commission in the period in question. Medicare statistics are not available at individual postcode level due to possible provider confidentiality considerations.

Medicare statistics are captured at the postcode level. Since some postcodes overlap federal electoral division boundaries, statistics by servicing provider postcode were mapped to electorate using data from the Census of Population and Housing showing the proportion of the population in each postcode in the electoral division of Calwell.

Caution should be exercised in interpreting Medicare statistics by provider region for areas of the Medicare Benefits Schedule such as pathology. The region from which tests are ordered need not be the region in which the tests are analysed. Changes in arrangements for the provision of such services can result in a significant variation in apparent service provision/the level of bulk billing etc, in the one region from year to year. Similarly, electorates/regions containing major hospitals and health facilities and electorates that encompass major regional centres will have higher rates of service provision.

**Governor-General: Entitlements**

(Question No. 224)

Mrs Irwin asked the Prime Minister, upon notice, on 14 March 2002:

(1) Under the terms of the contract of the Governor-General, what payout is the Commonwealth liable to make should the Governor-General resign before the end of the five year term of office.

(2) What payout is the Commonwealth liable to make if the Governor-General is dismissed.

(3) What pension or other entitlement does the Governor-General have on resignation before the end of the five year term of office.

(4) What pension or other entitlement does the Governor General have on dismissal before the end of the five year term of office.

Mr Howard—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) to (4) The Governor-General is not under contract. Rather, the Governor-General is appointed by The Queen and holds office at Her Majesty’s pleasure. A five year term is considered usual. Upon ceasing to hold office, a former governor-general is entitled to an allowance calculated in accordance with section 4 or 4A of the Governor-General Act 1974.

Other entitlements accorded to each former governor-general are determined by the prime minister of the day.

**Immigration: Villawood Detention Centre**

(Question No. 227)

Mrs Irwin asked the Minister for Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs, upon notice, on 14 March 2002:

(1) How many persons under the age of 18 years are currently detained at the Villawood Detention Centre.

(2) How many persons under the age of 18 at Villawood are (a) in family groups and (b) not accompanied by a parent.

(3) What facilities and programs are in place at Villawood for pre-school children.

(4) Are pre-school programs conducted in languages other than English; if not, why not.

(5) Has his Department attempted to place pre-school children in preschools outside the Villawood Detention Centre; if not, why not.

(6) What facilities and programs are in place at Villawood for primary school aged children.
(7) Has his Department attempted to place primary school aged children in schools outside the Villawood Detention Centre; if not, why not.

(8) Are primary school programs conducted in languages other than English; if not, why not.

(9) Are English language classes available for primary school aged children; if not, why not.

(10) What subjects are taught at primary school classes at Villawood.

(11) For how many hours each day and for how many days each week are primary classes available.

(12) Are educational programs for primary school aged children at Villawood accredited by the NSW Department of Education and Training; if not, why not.

(13) What facilities and programs are available at Villawood for children above primary school age.

(14) For how many hours each day and for how many days each week are secondary classes available.

(15) Are secondary programs conducted in languages other than English; if not, why not.

(16) Are English language classes available for secondary school aged children; if not, why not.

(17) Are educational programs for secondary school aged children at Villawood accredited by the NSW Department of Education and Training; if not, why not.

(18) What facilities and programs are available for persons under 18 years at the Villawood Detention Centre for post secondary or vocational training.

Mr Ruddock—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) As of 5 April 2002, there were 22 persons under the age of 18 detained at the Villawood Immigration Detention Centre.

(2) As of 5 April 2002, there were:
   (a) 20 persons under the age of 18 at Villawood are in family groups; and
   (b) 2 persons under the age of 18 at Villawood are not accompanied by a parent.

(3) The following facilities and programs are in place at Villawood for pre-school children:
   • Pre-school classes are conducted at the centre twice weekly;
   • A fully-equipped and resourced children’s play room;
   • 2 hour play sessions, five days a week; and
   • Weekend movie time and special treats for all children.

(4) Pre-school programs are not conducted in languages other than English. Due to the transitory nature of the detainee population at the centre and the large number of different languages spoken by detainees, pre-school education is provided in English.

(5) My Department has not attempted to place children in pre-schools outside Villawood since a qualified pre-school teacher is employed to provide education to children of pre-school age at the centre.

(6) The following facilities and programs are in place at Villawood for primary school aged children:
   • A fully resourced school room with trained and qualified teachers;
   • Planned excursions outside the centre twice a month;
   • Weekend movie time and special treats for all children; and
   • Activities with 2 external groups, ‘Youth With a Mission’ and ‘Project Crayon’. These two groups provide special arts and crafts and a variety of recreation and leisure activities for the primary school aged children at the centre.

(7) During preliminary discussions between the Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs (DIMIA), Australasian Correctional Management (ACM) and local schools last year, the issue of funding for students who are in Australia without a valid visa was raised by the schools as a barrier to allowing the enrolment of children at schools in the community. Besides an individual case where a child was transferred to an alternative place of detention in the community and attended a public school in Sydney last year, there have been no other primary school aged children educated in schools outside Villawood.
However, a qualified primary school teacher is employed at the centre and provides primary school education to children at the centre.

(8) Primary school programs are conducted in English and Urdu languages although the emphasis is placed on English. This is due to the relatively small number of children at the centre and the wide variety of languages which they speak.

(9) English classes are part of the daily curriculum for primary school aged children at the centre.

(10) Some of the key learning areas stipulated by the NSW Department of Education are taught at Villawood. These key learning areas include English, Maths and Human Society and Its Environment, with priority given to English.

(11) Primary school classes are conducted for five hours each weekday, 48 weeks a year.

(12) Education programs for primary school aged children at Villawood are not accredited by the NSW Department of Education and Training but DIMIA and ACM are currently working towards accreditation being granted later this year.

(13) Secondary and primary school are combined due to the low and variable numbers of children at the centre. Therefore, the facilities and programs available to secondary school aged children are:

- A fully resourced school room with trained and qualified teachers;
- Planned excursions outside the centre twice a month;
- Weekend movie time and special treats for all children; and
- Activities with 2 external groups, ‘Youth With a Mission’ and ‘Project Crayon’. These two groups provide special arts and crafts and a variety of recreation and leisure activities for the primary school aged children at the centre.

(14) Like primary school classes, secondary school classes are conducted for five hours each weekday, 48 weeks a year.

(15) Like primary school programs, secondary school programs are conducted in English and Urdu languages although the emphasis is placed on English. This is due to the relatively small number of children at the centre and the wide variety of languages which they speak. For example, as of 5 April 2002, there were only 2 children at the centre in the secondary school age group.

(16) English classes are part of the daily curriculum for secondary school aged children at the centre.

(17) Education programs for secondary aged children at Villawood are not accredited by the NSW Department of Education and Training but DIMIA and ACM are currently working towards accreditation being granted later this year.

(18) The following facilities are available for persons under 18 at the Villawood Immigration Detention Centre (IDC) for post-secondary or vocational training:

- There is an incentive development program involving behaviour management of all school-aged children. There are two outings for children each month and subject to satisfactory school attendance and behaviour and general centre behaviour, school-aged children are able to go on these outings; and
- In addition, there is a full range of training programs available for detainees under the age of 18 years in Villawood IDC that focuses on skills that may be of use in the general community or within a detention facility, such as computer literacy and English language.

**Australian Local Government Association: Research Fund**
(Question No. 228)

Mr Martin Ferguson asked the Minister for Transport and Regional Services, upon notice, on 14 March 2002:

(1) Further to his announcement on 12 March 2002 declaring the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) to be an approved organisation in order to qualify for research funding of $150,000, under which sub-section of section 8 of the Australian Land Transport Development Act is the declaration made.

(2) On what date did the ALGA make an application to be declared and receive this funding.

(3) What amount of funding did the ALGA seek in its application.
(4) How many previous applications has the ALGA submitted for funding under this section of the Act, and what amounts were sought on each occasion, which applications were successful and for what research projects were the successful grants.

(5) Did he or his Department publicly or privately call for expressions of interest from any or all organisations, individuals or research organisations competent and available to conduct the national strategy on strategic asset management in local government; if so, when and how many expressions of interest were received; if not, why not.

(6) What criteria, if any, were applied to the selection of the ALGA to conduct this research project and did he consider any potential conflicts of interest between the ALGAs role of representing the interests of local government authorities and ALGA also evaluating the effectiveness of those local government authorities expenditure on projects under the Roads to Recovery program.

(7) Is this ALGA research project and the process that will evaluate the effectiveness of Roads to Recovery projects the only evaluation he intends to conduct of the effectiveness of Roads to Recovery projects; if not, what other processes will be applied and when.

(8) What are the criteria or guidelines that operate to assess applications for declarations under each part of section 8 of the Act.

(9) In each year of the operation of the Act, (a) how many declarations have been made under section 8, (b) which organisations and individuals have been declared, (c) what sums were granted and (d) what was the purpose of the grant.

(10) From which program are these projects funded.

Mr Anderson—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) The declaration was made under subsection 8(1) of the Australian Land Transport Development Act 1988 (the Act).

(2) The letter requesting the funding was dated 8 February 2002.

(3) $150,000 was requested.

(4) This is the first grant paid to ALGA under the Act. There is no record of previous applications from ALGA for research funding under the Act.

(5) and (6). Expressions of interest were not sought for this project. It was planned following discussions at the Mildura Local Roads Congress where it was agreed that the Roads to Recovery Programme would be reviewed by the Government in conjunction with ALGA. The ALGA is better placed than any other organisation to obtain the information required of councils for this project and to deliver the outcomes required.

(7) No other processes to evaluate the effectiveness of the Roads to Recovery Programme have been developed at this stage.

(8) The following guidelines are used to assess proposed projects for research into land transport or road safety:

- what are the benefits and costs of the projects
- are the benefits national in character
- is the research being undertaken in an area relevant to the Commonwealth’s direct interest in transport
- does the research support a Commonwealth transport objective or policy initiative
- has similar research already been undertaken
- does the proposed project translate research into practice; and
- are other organisations with an interest in the proposal prepared to contribute to its costs.

(9) The following table sets out, year by year, the declarations made under section 8, the individuals and organisations declared, the project cost and the purpose of the grant.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year Grant Made</th>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Project Cost</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Jan 1989 to 30 Jun 1990</td>
<td>Morphett Vale High School</td>
<td>2,000</td>
<td>Funding assistance to complete solar powered car for entry in the 1990 world solar challenge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Grant Made</td>
<td>Organisation</td>
<td>Project Cost $</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>------------</td>
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<td>----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990-91</td>
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<td>Municipal Association of Victoria</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>192,740</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Bureau of Transport and Communications Economics</td>
<td>11,000</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>National Institute of Economic and Industry Research Pty Ltd</td>
<td>40,000</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>WA Main Roads Department</td>
<td>50,000</td>
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<td>Australian Road Research Board</td>
<td>2,500,000</td>
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<td>Sly &amp; Wiegall</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>University of Western Sydney</td>
<td>20,000</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>Blain/Johnston/PPK Consultants</td>
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<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Grant Made</td>
<td>Organisation</td>
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<td>Teknis Electronics Pty Ltd</td>
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<td>Dr Sweatman</td>
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<td>Year</td>
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<td>Year</td>
<td>Grant Made</td>
<td>Organisation</td>
<td>Project Cost $</td>
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<td>------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------</td>
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<td>1996-97</td>
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<td>Vic Roads</td>
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<td>Road Transport Forum</td>
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<td>Australian Bureau of Statistics</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Federal Department of Human Services &amp; Health</td>
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<td></td>
<td>University of Technology, Sydney</td>
<td>48,000</td>
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<td>Peter Rozen, legal consultant</td>
<td>30,000</td>
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<td>ITS Australia</td>
<td>120,000</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Department of Transport Tasmania</td>
<td>50,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Grant Made</td>
<td>Organisation</td>
<td>Project Cost $</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
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<td>----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998-99</td>
<td>National Road Transport Commission (NRTC)</td>
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<td>Coordinate bridge surveys by the States and Territories to identify bridges requiring upgrade for increased mass limits.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1998-99</td>
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<td>Commonwealth Government’s 1998-99 contribution to various road research projects jointly funded with the State and Territory road and traffic authorities.</td>
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<td>1998-99</td>
<td>ARRB Transport Research Pty Ltd</td>
<td>665,105</td>
<td>Commonwealth Government’s 1998-99 contribution to the National Interest Service research program jointly funded with the State and Territory road and traffic authorities.</td>
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<td>1999-2000</td>
<td>Road Transport Forum</td>
<td>500,000</td>
<td>Development of the road transport industry accreditation programs (TruckSafe).</td>
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<td>1999-2000</td>
<td>Keep Australia Beautiful National Association Inc.</td>
<td>40,000</td>
<td>Survey of litter on the National Highway and propose actions to have companies reduce the amount of packaging in order to reduce litter.</td>
</tr>
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<td>1999-2000</td>
<td>Austroads Inc.</td>
<td>1,200,000</td>
<td>Commonwealth Government’s 1999-00 membership contribution.</td>
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<td>1999-2000</td>
<td>ARRB Transport Research Pty Ltd</td>
<td>409,000</td>
<td>Commonwealth Government’s 1999-00 contribution to the National Interest Service research program jointly funded with the State and Territory road and traffic authorities.</td>
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<td>1999-2000</td>
<td>Queensland Department of Main Roads</td>
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<td>Testing the viability of heavy vehicle tracking technologies in Queensland as part of the National Intelligent Access project.</td>
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<td>Tasmanian Department of Infrastructure, Energy and Resources.</td>
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<td>Testing the viability of heavy vehicle tracking technologies in Queensland as part of the National Intelligent Access project.</td>
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<td>1999-2000</td>
<td>SMEC Australia Pty Ltd</td>
<td>113,990</td>
<td>Review of cost management procedures used by the RTA NSW.</td>
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<td>1999-2000</td>
<td>National Transport Secretariat (NTS)</td>
<td>1,225,000</td>
<td>Commonwealth share of funding to the NTS, an expert body established to advise the Australian Transport Council on transport issues of national significance.</td>
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<td>2000-01</td>
<td>ARRB Transport Research Pty Ltd</td>
<td>458,292</td>
<td>Commonwealth Government’s 1999-00 contribution to the National Interest Service research program jointly funded with the State and Territory road and traffic authorities.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2000-01</td>
<td>Flagstaff Consulting Group Pty Ltd</td>
<td>630,000</td>
<td>Third party audit of proposals for Hume Highway upgrading at Albury.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
(10) Projects are funded under the Act.

Sydney (Kingsford Smith) Airport: Sale
(Question No. 230)

Mr Murphy asked the Minister for Transport and Regional Services, upon notice, on 14 March 2002:

1. Is he aware of an article titled Race on to sell Sydney Airport by Budget in The Sydney Morning Herald, dated 11 March 2002.
2. Is the Government to restart the deferred sale of Sydney Airport Corporation.
3. Did he say last week words to the effect that he would like to sell Sydney Airport as soon as possible for the best possible price.
4. Was the sale of Sydney Airport and Sydney basin airports stalled due to (a) the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Centre and Pentagon on 11 September 2001, (b) the subsequent downturn in tourism travel to and from Australia and with it, a downturn in passenger and aircraft movements at Sydney Airport and with it, a downturn in revenue for the owner/operator of Sydney Airport or (c) the collapse of Ansett Airways Ltd; if so, which factors.
5. Are there any other factors that have contributed to the stalling of Sydney Airport and Sydney Basin airports, including Bankstown, Hoxton Park and Camden airports, in addition to those factors referred to in part (4).
6. Was the lowering of the sale price the only factor that led to the stalling of sale of Sydney Airport; if not, what other factor has led to the stalling of the sale of Sydney Airport and Sydney basin airports.
7. Are environmental factors a relevant consideration affecting the sale of Sydney Airport and Sydney basin airports; if so, what are those environmental factors.
8. Has any assessment of the environmental impact on Sydney basin airports as a result of privatisation been undertaken; if so, what environmental impact will privatisation have on the residents living the Sydney Basin and on the environment generally.
9. What regulatory controls will exist from a fully privatised Sydney Airport and Sydney Basin airports with the arrival of new generation aircraft, including the new super-jumbo jet and A380 Air Bus.
10. Will new generation aircraft such as the super-jumbo and A380 Air Bus require $2 billion worth of alterations to the existing runways at Sydney Airport; if not, what is the impact on Sydney Airport infrastructure necessary to make Sydney Airport capable of complying with the runway standards for take-offs and landings for the super-jumbo and A380 aircraft.
11. What will be the estimated cost of infrastructure upgrade of Sydney Airport for the works described in part (10).
12. Is the estimated cost of the upgrade of infrastructure of Sydney Airport to accommodate flights from the new generation aircraft a reason why the Government is now recommencing the sale process for Sydney Airport at this time.
13. Is the necessity to spend a significant amount of money to upgrade the infrastructure at Sydney Airport to accommodate new generation aircraft a moving force on the Government to sell that airport at this time and a financial burden to be borne by the prospective winner of the bid to purchase the long term operating lease of Sydney Airport.
14. As a privatised airport, will Sydney Airports Airport Lessee company seek to recover the costs of the upgrade of Sydney Airports runways by passing the cost of those upgrades onto aeronautical and non-aeronautical services of the airport.
15. How will he regulate the costs of Sydney Airports increase in infrastructure investment costs through the upgrade of Sydney Airports runways, now that the Government has permitted to lapse any effective pricing surveillance regulations that regulate the price of aeronautical and non-aeronautical services at Sydney Airport.
16. How will prices of aeronautical and non-aeronautical services be regulated in a scenario of a fully privatised Sydney Airport.

Mr Anderson—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:
Yes.

The Government announced the recommencement of the sale process for Sydney Airport on 11 March 2002.

The Government’s sale objectives remain unchanged from those announced when the sale process was initiated in early 2001. One of the sale objectives is to optimise sale proceeds within the context of the broader Government sales and policy objectives.

The Government’s decision in September 2001 to defer the sale of Sydney Airport until early 2002 followed advice from its advisers that the Government’s sale objectives could not be satisfactorily met in the current timeframe in light of the tragic events in the United States and the subsequent level of disruption in the global financial markets and airline and aviation sectors. There was no decision made to change the timing for the sale of Bankstown, Camden and Hoxton Park airports.

One of the Government’s sale objectives is to ensure the sale outcome is consistent with relevant airport legislative, regulatory and policy requirements, including environmental, foreign investment, competition, access and pricing policies.

There is no requirement to undertake an environmental assessment for the proposed change in ownership of the airport leases.

Sydney Airport and the other Sydney basin airports would continue to be subject to the provisions of the Airports Act 1996 and the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 after they were privatised. Other legislative based measures currently in place to manage demand or to safeguard community interests in relation to Sydney Airport would also continue in force after privatisation.

The introduction of New Large Aircraft such as the A380 into regular public transport operation may require an upgrade to facilities at a number of airports around the world. The International Civil Aviation Organisation and the Civil Aviation Safety Authority will ultimately determine the standards and procedures required for this type of aircraft to operate into Australian airports. The full extent of operational requirement is not yet clear but in any event the timing and quantum of any proposed upgrade in facilities would be a matter for consideration by the Airport Lessee Company at that time. A major airport development would also be subject to the assessment and consultation requirements of the Airports Act 1996 and the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999.

The Government’s decision to recommence the sale process followed consideration of advice from its sale advisers indicating that market conditions had stabilised since the sale was deferred in September last year.

See answers to (10), (11) & (12) above.

The financing arrangements for any future upgrading work at Sydney Airport will be a commercial matter for the Airport Lessee Company.

The Government’s response to the Productivity Commission’s report on Price Regulation of Airport Services was announced on 13 May 2002. This response details the arrangements that will take effect from 1 July 2002 for a number of airports including Sydney.

**Medicare: Services**

(2) Yes.

The Medicare Services

(1) (a) Victoria, (b) 3074, (c) 3075, (d) 3076, (e) 3082, (f) 3083, (g) 3087, (h) 3088, (i) 3089, (j) 3090, (k) 3091 and (l) 3752.

Mr Jenkins asked the Minister representing the Minister for Health and Ageing, upon notice, on 14 March 2002:

What percentage of Medicare services by broad type of service were direct billed during (a) 1998-99, (b) 1999-2000 and (c) 2000-2001 in (i) Victoria and (ii) the electoral division of Scullin and (iii) the postcode areas of (A) 3074, (B) 3075, (C) 3076, (D) 3082, (E) 3083, (F) 3087, (G) 3088, (H) 3089, (I) 3090, (J) 3091 and (K) 3752.

Mr Andrews—The Minister for Health and Ageing has provided the following answer to the honourable member’s question:
The percentage of Medicare services by broad type of service, that were direct billed during (a) 1998-99, (b) 1999-2000 and (c) 2000-2001 in (i) Victoria and (ii) the electoral division of Scullin and (iii) the nominated postcode areas was as follows:

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<td>75.6</td>
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<td>Enhanced Primary Care</td>
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<td>Other unref attendances</td>
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<td>n.a.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pathology</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diagnostic imaging</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operations</td>
<td>68.9</td>
<td>68.3</td>
<td>66.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Optometry</td>
<td>96.9</td>
<td>96.8</td>
<td>96.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>68.3</td>
<td>73.0</td>
<td>75.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>89.2</td>
<td>89.1</td>
<td>88.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nominated postcodes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GP/VR attendances</td>
<td>86.8</td>
<td>86.9</td>
<td>85.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enhanced Primary Care</td>
<td>n.app</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>99.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other unref attendances</td>
<td>95.8</td>
<td>96.9</td>
<td>98.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialist attendances</td>
<td>58.9</td>
<td>60.6</td>
<td>58.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obstetrics</td>
<td>59.3</td>
<td>53.2</td>
<td>50.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anaesthetics</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pathology</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diagnostic imaging</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operations</td>
<td>61.8</td>
<td>61.0</td>
<td>56.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Optometry</td>
<td>97.7</td>
<td>97.6</td>
<td>97.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>61.7</td>
<td>66.3</td>
<td>70.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>85.2</td>
<td>85.2</td>
<td>84.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

n.app – not applicable; items new to Medicare Benefits Schedule in 1999-00

n.a. – not available due to possible provider confidentiality considerations; rates are included in totals for the respective years.

Notes

The above statistics relate to services provided on a ‘fee-for-service’ basis, in the nominated regions, for which Medicare benefits were processed by the Health Insurance Commission in the period in question.

Medicare statistics are not available at individual postcode level due to possible provider confidentiality considerations.
Medicare statistics are captured at the postcode level. Since some postcodes overlap federal electoral division boundaries, statistics by servicing provider postcode were mapped to electorate using data from the Census of Population and Housing showing the proportion of the population in each postcode in the electoral division of Scullin.

Caution should be exercised in interpreting Medicare statistics by provider region for areas of the Medicare Benefits Schedule such as pathology. The region from which tests are ordered need not be the region in which the tests are analysed. Changes in arrangements for the provision of such services can result in a significant variation in apparent service provision/the level of bulk billing etc, in the one region from year to year. Similarly, electorates/regions containing major hospitals and health facilities and electorates that encompass major regional centres will have higher rates of service provision.

**Medicare: Services**

(Question No. 243)

Mr Jenkins asked the Minister representing the Minister for Health and Ageing, upon notice, on 14 March 2002:

What was the total number of Medicare services provided during (a) 1998-99, (b) 1999-2000 and (c) 2000-2001 in (i) Victoria, (ii) the electoral division of Scullin and (iii) the postcode areas of (A) 3074, (B) 3075, (C) 3076, (D) 3082, (E) 3083, (F) 3087, (G) 3088, (H) 3089, (I) 3090, (J) 3091 and (K) 3752.

Mr Andrews—The Minister for Health and Ageing has provided the following answer to the honourable member’s question:

The total number of Medicare services provided during (a) 1998-99, (b) 1999-2000 and (c) 2000-2001 in (i) Victoria, (ii) the electoral division of Scullin and (iii) the nominated postcode areas was as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td>52,092,315</td>
<td>53,288,151</td>
<td>53,989,264</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electoral division of Scullin</td>
<td>1,050,626</td>
<td>1,132,582</td>
<td>1,122,678</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nominated postcodes</td>
<td>1,406,338</td>
<td>1,514,942</td>
<td>1,518,837</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes

The above statistics relate to services provided on a ‘fee-for-service’ basis, in the nominated regions, for which Medicare benefits were processed by the Health Insurance Commission in the period in question. Medicare statistics are not available at individual postcode level due to possible provider confidentiality considerations.

Medicare statistics are captured at the postcode level. Since some postcodes overlap federal electoral division boundaries, statistics by servicing provider postcode were mapped to electorate using data from the Census of Population and Housing showing the proportion of the population in each postcode in the electoral division of Scullin.

Caution should be exercised in interpreting Medicare statistics by provider region. Electorates/regions containing major hospitals and health facilities and electorates that encompass major regional centres will have higher rates of service provision.

**Medicare: Services**

(Question No. 244)

Mr Jenkins asked the Minister representing the Minister for Health and Ageing, upon notice, on 14 March 2002:

How many Medicare services were provided per capita during (a) 1998-99, (b) 1999-2000 and (c) 2000-2001 in (i) Victoria, (ii) the electoral division of Scullin and (iii) the postcode areas of (A) 3074, (B) 3075, (C) 3076, (D) 3082, (E) 3083, (F) 3087, (G) 3088, (H) 3089, (I) 3090, (J) 3091 and (K) 3752.

Mr Andrews—The Minister for Health and Ageing has provided the following answer to the honourable member’s question:
The number of Medicare services provided per capita during (a) 1998-99, (b) 1999-2000 and (c) 2000-2001 in (i) Victoria, (ii) the electoral division of Scullin and (iii) the nominated postcode areas was as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>11.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electoral division of Scullin</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>8.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nominated postcodes</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>8.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes

The above statistics relate to services provided on a ‘fee-for-service’ basis, in the nominated regions, for which Medicare benefits were processed by the Health Insurance Commission in the period in question. Medicare statistics are not available at individual postcode level due to possible provider confidentiality considerations.

Medicare statistics are captured at the postcode level. Since some postcodes overlap federal electoral division boundaries, statistics by servicing provider postcode were mapped to electorate using data from the Census of Population and Housing showing the proportion of the population in each postcode in the electoral division of Scullin.

Caution should be exercised in interpreting Medicare statistics by provider region. Electorates/regions containing major hospitals and health facilities and electorates that encompass major regional centres will have higher rates of service provision.

Medicare: Services
(Question No. 245)

Mr Jenkins asked the Minister representing the Minister for Health and Ageing, upon notice, on 14 March 2002:

What percentage of Medicare services were provided at or below the scheduled fee during (a) 1998-99, (b) 1999-2000 and (c) 2000-2001 in (i) Victoria, (ii) the electoral division of Scullin and (iii) the postcode areas of (A) 3074, (B) 3075, (C) 3076, (D) 3082, (E) 3083, (F) 3087, (G) 3088, (H) 3089, (I) 3090, (J) 3091 and (K) 3752.

Mr Andrews—The Minister for Health and Ageing has provided the following answer to the honourable member’s question:

The number of Medicare services provided per capita during (a) 1998-99, (b) 1999-2000 and (c) 2000-2001 in (i) Victoria, (ii) the electoral division of Scullin and (iii) the nominated postcode areas was as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td>81.5</td>
<td>80.9</td>
<td>79.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electoral division of Scullin</td>
<td>91.7</td>
<td>91.6</td>
<td>90.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nominated postcodes</td>
<td>88.2</td>
<td>88.2</td>
<td>87.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes

The above statistics relate to services provided on a ‘fee-for-service’ basis, in the nominated regions, for which Medicare benefits were processed by the Health Insurance Commission in the period in question. Medicare statistics are not available at individual postcode level due to possible provider confidentiality considerations.

Medicare statistics are captured at the postcode level. Since some postcodes overlap federal electoral division boundaries, statistics by servicing provider postcode were mapped to electorate using data from the Census of Population and Housing showing the proportion of the population in each postcode in the electoral division of Scullin.

Caution should be exercised in interpreting Medicare statistics by provider region. Electorates/regions containing major hospitals and health facilities and electorates that encompass major regional centres will have higher rates of service provision.
Employment: Work for the Dole
(Question No. 256)

Mrs Irwin asked the Minister for Employment Services, upon notice on, 20 March 2002:
(1) What “Work for the Dole” projects located in the (a) Fairfield and (b) Liverpool, NSW local government areas have been funded over the past 2 years.
(2) What is the present status of each project.
(3) What agency was responsible for each project.
(4) What funding was provided by the Commonwealth for each project.
(5) How many (a) males and (b) and females are or were employed on each project.

Mr Brough—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

Work for the Dole activities are recommended to the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations by Community Work Coordinators (CWCs) who are contracted to develop and manage activities in geographical areas called Employment Service Areas (ESAs). ESAs do not align with Local Government Areas (LGAs). However based on the specified location of activities the following tables have been produced.

Table 1 details the Work for the Dole activities that have been funded in the Fairfield LGA and Table 2 the Liverpool LGA. Table 3 provides details on activities in locations that fall in both LGAs. The tables include details on the current status of each activity that has been funded since April 2000, the CWC and sponsor organisation for each activity and the number of males and females that commenced on each activity.

Funding of individual activities is commercial-in-confidence. However total funding approved for activities in the Fairfield LGA (Table 1) is $1 547 910.71 and in the Liverpool LGA (Table 2) $1 261 167.99. Funding approved for the activities that fall in both LGAs, as identified in Table 3, totals $629 645.38.
## Fairfield Local Government Area

**Table 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity Title</th>
<th>CWC Name</th>
<th>Sponsor Name</th>
<th>Activity Description</th>
<th>Females Commenced</th>
<th>Males Commenced</th>
<th>Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Retail in Second Hand Clothing</td>
<td>UNITING CHURCH IN AUSTRALIA (NSW)</td>
<td>WESLEY UNITING EMPLOYMENT SERVICE</td>
<td>THE PROJECT PROVIDED EXPERIENCE IN FASHION RETAIL OUTLETS</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cabramatta Creek Recreational Development</td>
<td>MISSION AUSTRALIA</td>
<td>MISSION EMPLOYMENT CABRAMATTA</td>
<td>IN CONJUNCTION WITH FAIRFIELD CITY COUNCIL, DEVELOPED THE CABRAMATTA CREEK RECREATIONAL AREA AND WALKING TRACK.</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairfield/Cabramatta PCYC Maintenance Project</td>
<td>UNITING CHURCH IN AUSTRALIA (NSW)</td>
<td>FAIRFIELD/CABRAMATTA POLICE &amp; YOUTH CLUB</td>
<td>THIS PROJECT TOOK PLACE AT THE FAIRFIELD/CABRAMATTA PCYC COMMONLY KNOWN AS THE POLICE BOYS CLUB. MINOR BUILDING MAINTENANCE, PAINTING MAIN HALL, GYM AND JUDO ROOM, REMOVAL OF GRAFFITI</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruby Street Project</td>
<td>MISSION AUSTRALIA</td>
<td>TO GOD BE THE GLORY MINISTRIES INC</td>
<td>REFURBISHMENT OF LOW RENTAL ACCOMMODATION FOR EMERGENCY HOUSING</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairfield City Farm</td>
<td>H &amp; H ACCREDITED TRAINING AUSTRALASIA INC</td>
<td>H &amp; H ACCREDITED TRAINING AUSTRALASIA INC</td>
<td>THIS PROJECT INVOLVED VARIOUS TASKS AT A CITY FARM. TASKS RANGED FROM SEED COLLECTION &amp; PROPAGATION TO ADMINISTRATION &amp; RESTAURANT ASSISTANCE</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cabramatta Community Work Experience</td>
<td>MISSION AUSTRALIA</td>
<td>MISSION AUSTRALIA CABRAMATTA</td>
<td>WORK EXPERIENCE IN A VARIETY OF COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS. MEALS ON WHEELS, ART &amp; CULTURAL ETC.</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foodbank</td>
<td>UNITING CHURCH IN AUST. PROPERTY TRUST</td>
<td>FOODBANK NSW LIMITED</td>
<td>THE PROJECT INVOLVED PARTICIPANTS IN WAREHOUSING AND FOOD PROCESSING AT FOODBANKS FACILITY IN WETHERILL PARK</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairfield Work Experience 11</td>
<td>MISSION AUSTRALIA</td>
<td>MISSION EMPLOYMENT FAIRFIELD SKILLSHARE</td>
<td>PROVIDED WORK EXPERIENCE TO UNEMPLOYED NON-ENGLISH BACKGROUND IN VARIOUS NON PROFIT AREAS WITHIN THE LOCAL AREA IN COUNCILS, COMMUNITY CENTRES</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Howard Park</td>
<td>MISSION AUSTRALIA</td>
<td>MISSION AUSTRALIA</td>
<td>CONSTRUCTION OF 1000M CYCLEWAY, LANDSCAPING, FENCING, WEED REMOVAL, BUSH REGENERATION, GROUND STABILISATION, TREE &amp; SHRUB PROPAGATION &amp; PLANTING, SOIL &amp; WATER TESTING &amp; BUSH MAINTENANCE</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>Completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foodbank 2 Fairfield</td>
<td>UNITING CHURCH IN AUST. PROPERTY TRUST</td>
<td>FOODBANK NSW LIMITED</td>
<td>THE PROJECT INVOLVED PARTICIPANTS IN WAREHOUSE DUTIES INCLUDING PREPARING FOOD PARCELS AT FOODBANKS FACILITY IN WETHERILL PARK</td>
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<td>17</td>
<td>Completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foodbank 2 Macarthur</td>
<td>UNITING CHURCH IN AUST. PROPERTY TRUST</td>
<td>FOODBANK NSW LIMITED</td>
<td>THE PROJECT INVOLVED PARTICIPANTS IN WAREHOUSE DUTIES</td>
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<tr>
<td>Activity Title</td>
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<td>Activity Description</td>
<td>Females</td>
<td>Males</td>
<td>Status</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>AUST. PROPERTY TRUST</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>INCLUDING PREPARING FOOD PARCELS AT FOODBANKS WETHERILL PARK FACILITIES.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAIRFIELD CITY FARM HERITAGE &amp; BEAUTIFICATION PROGRAM</td>
<td>MISSION AUSTRALIA</td>
<td>MISSION AUSTRALIA CABRAMATTA</td>
<td>TASKS INCLUDED LANDSCAPE PLANNING, PAINTING, CARPENTRY, BRICK LAYING, BASIC HORTICULTURE, NOXIOUS WEED CONTROL, LANDSCAPE PRACTICE, PLANTING, LIGHT CONSTRUCTION, TOOL IDENTIFICATION &amp; USE, PLANT IDENTIFICATION &amp; CARE, &amp; PATHWAY CONSTRUCTION.</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>Completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CABRAMATTA WORK EXPERIENCE II</td>
<td>MISSION AUSTRALIA</td>
<td>MISSION AUSTRALIA</td>
<td>ONE TO ONE PLACEMENTS WITH VARIOUS COMMUNITY GROUPS WITHIN THE AREA GAINING SKILLS IN CLERICAL AND OTHER AREAS.</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ORPHAN SCHOOL CREEK BANK RESTORATION STAGE 2</td>
<td>H &amp; H ACCREDITED TRAINING AUSTRALASIA INC</td>
<td>H &amp; H ACCREDITED TRAINING AUSTRALASIA INC</td>
<td>THIS PROJECT INVOLVED PARTICIPANTS IN A WIDE VARIETY OF TASKS THAT ENHANCED THE SURROUNDING BUSHLAND AREA AND INCREASED THE ACCESSIBILITY OF FACILITIES TO LOCAL COMMUNITY MEMBERS.</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>Completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CABRAMATTA PCYC STAGE 2</td>
<td>UNITING CHURCH IN AUST. PROPERTY TRUST</td>
<td>POLICE &amp; COMMUNITY YOUTH CLUB</td>
<td>THIS PROJECT INVOLVED MINOR BUILDING MAINTENANCE MAINLY CONSISTING OF PAINTING AND DECORATING.</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>Completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1ST FAIRFIELD HEIGHTS SCOUT HALL REFURBISHMENT</td>
<td>H &amp; H ACCREDITED TRAINING AUSTRALASIA INC</td>
<td>H &amp; H ACCREDITED TRAINING AUSTRALASIA INC</td>
<td>UPGRADED THE FACILITIES AT THE SCOUT HALL BOTH INTERNALLY &amp; EXTERNALLY. INCLUDING LANDSCAPING AND BUILDING RENOVATION.</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHERRYBROOK PARK CABRAMATTA CREEK</td>
<td>H &amp; H ACCREDITED TRAINING AUSTRALASIA INC</td>
<td>H &amp; H ACCREDITED TRAINING AUSTRALASIA INC</td>
<td>ESTABLISHED AN AREA OF HEALTHY BUSHLAND ALONG CABRAMATTA CREEK IN ORDER TO PROVIDE A GOOD SEED BANK FOR FUTURE WORK ON THE CREEK.</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>Completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAIRFIELD CITY FARM-STAGE 2</td>
<td>H &amp; H ACCREDITED TRAINING AUSTRALASIA INC</td>
<td>H &amp; H ACCREDITED TRAINING AUSTRALASIA INC</td>
<td>PARTICIPANTS INVOLVED IN VARIOUS TASKS IN RUNNING A FARM.</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>Completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAIRFIELD COMMUNITY WORK EXPERIENCE</td>
<td>MISSION AUSTRALIA</td>
<td>MISSION EMPLOYMENT FAIRFIELD SKILLSHARE</td>
<td>PROVIDED THE UNEMPLOYED OF THE FAIRFIELD AREA WITH RELEVANT AND INDIVIDUALISED WORK EXPERIENCE WITHIN A WIDE RANGE OF NON-PROFIT ORGANISATIONS IN GENERAL OFFICE SKILLS SUCH AS RECEPTION, DATA ENTRY, WORD PROCESSING, CUSTOMER SERVICE AND OFFICE EQUIPMENT USE, WAREHOUSING, PACKING, GARDENING AND GENERAL MAINTENANCE.</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FOODBANK 3 FAIRFIELD</td>
<td>UNITING CHURCH IN AUST. PROPERTY</td>
<td>FOODBANK NSW LIMITED</td>
<td>THIS PROJECT INVOLVED PARTICIPANTS IN WAREHOUSE DUTIES INCLUDING PREPARING FOOD PARCELS AT FOODBANKS FACILITY AT</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity Title</td>
<td>CWC Name</td>
<td>Sponsor Name</td>
<td>Activity Description</td>
<td>Females Commenced</td>
<td>Males Commenced</td>
<td>Status</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CARRAMAR COMMUNITY CENTRE</td>
<td>H &amp; H ACCREDITED TRAINING</td>
<td>H &amp; H ACCREDITED TRAINING</td>
<td>UPGRADING OF COMMUNITY CENTRE FACILITIES, PARTICIPANTS INVOLVED IN A VARIETY OF TASKS INCLUDING PAINTING, CARPENTRY, TILING, GARDENING</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>Completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IST SMITHFIELD SCOUT GROUP</td>
<td>H &amp; H ACCREDITED TRAINING</td>
<td>H &amp; H ACCREDITED TRAINING</td>
<td>UPGRADED THE FACILITIES AT THE SCOUT HALL BOTH INTERNALLY &amp; EXTERNALLY. PARTICIPANTS WILL BE INVOLVED IN PAINTING, CONCRETING AND ROOF REPAIRS</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SMITHFIELD WETHERILL PARK</td>
<td>UNITING CHURCH IN AUST. PROPERTY TRUST</td>
<td>FAIRFIELD CITY COUNCIL</td>
<td>IMPROVE THE APPEARANCE OF THE SMITHFIELD WETHERILL PARK. PARTICIPANTS WILL BE INVOLVED IN LANDSCAPING ACTIVITIES</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Current</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAIRFIELD WORK EXPERIENCE</td>
<td>H &amp; H ACCREDITED TRAINING</td>
<td>H &amp; H ACCREDITED TRAINING</td>
<td>INVOLVES PAINTING, PATHWAY CONSTRUCTION, REFURBISHMENT OF HERITAGE BUILDINGS, LANDCARE, ADMINISTRATION, RETAIL</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>Current</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAIRFIELD CITY COUNCIL</td>
<td>H &amp; H ACCREDITED TRAINING</td>
<td>H &amp; H ACCREDITED TRAINING</td>
<td>PARTICIPATING IN BUSH REGENERATION ACTIVITIES, &amp; CREATION &amp; IMPROVEMENT OF PASSIVE RECREATIONAL AREAS FOR RESIDENTS</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Current</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMMUNITY OFFICE LINK</td>
<td>H &amp; H ACCREDITED TRAINING</td>
<td>MISSION AUSTRALIA</td>
<td>ASSIST THE VARIOUS ETHNIC GROUPS IN THE EMPLOYMENT SERVICE AREA TO DELIVER THEIR SERVICES TO THE COMMUNITY. TASKS INCLUDE MARKETING SERVICES OF ORGANISATION TO WIDER COMMUNITY, CLERICAL, ADMINISTRATION, RECORD KEEPING, PHOTOCOPYING, RECEPTION, LIAISING WITH THE PUBLIC, LANDSCAPING, GARDENING</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Current</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAIRFIELD HIGH SCHOOL</td>
<td>H &amp; H ACCREDITED TRAINING</td>
<td>H &amp; H ACCREDITED TRAINING</td>
<td>PARTICIPANTS ARE INVOLVED IN THE UPGRADE OF FACILITIES AT FAIRFIELD HIGH SCHOOL. TASKS INCLUDE GENERAL GARDEN MAINTENANCE eg. POISON, CLEAR AND REMOVE GRASS FROM FRONT OF SCHOOL, MULCH, TRANSPLANT GROUND COVER, CLEAN UP ALONG HORSELEY DRIVE AND TIP TOP FENCE LINE, REMOVE COMPOST BINS, LOP TREES, PAINT MURALS ON TOILETS BLOCKS.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Current</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FEEDING THE DISADVANTAGED</td>
<td>UNITING CHURCH IN AUST. PROPERTY TRUST</td>
<td>FOODBANK NSW LIMITED</td>
<td>THE PROJECT INVOLVES WAREHOUSING AND FOOD PROCESSING ACTIVITIES</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Current</td>
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<tr>
<td>Activity Title</td>
<td>CWC Name</td>
<td>Sponsor Name</td>
<td>Activity Description</td>
<td>Females Commenced</td>
<td>Males Commenced</td>
<td>Status</td>
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<td>----------------------------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>WEAVING GARDEN CASULA</td>
<td>MISSION AUSTRALIA</td>
<td>MISSION EMPLOYMENT GREEN VALLEY</td>
<td>DEVELOPMENT OF WETLAND AREAS FOR THE GROWING OF WEAVING MATERIALS. ACTIVITIES INCLUDED PLANNING, PREPARATION, BUILDING OF WALKWAYS, LANDSCAPING, BUSH REGENERATION AND CONSTRUCTION OF DISPLAY SIGNAGE AND SEATING.</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>Completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CITY SAFE-MILLER</td>
<td>H &amp; H ACCREDITED TRAINING AUSTRALASIA</td>
<td>H &amp; H ACCREDITED TRAINING</td>
<td>PARTICIPANTS WORKED ALONGSIDE LIVERPOOL CITY COUNCIL RANGERS. WORK EXPERIENCE WAS GAINED IN EARLY DETECTION AND REPORTING OF ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES, ANIMAL MANAGEMENT, ILLEGAL SIGNAGE, GRAFFITI, THE DISCARDING OF TROLLEYS IN THE LOCAL CREEKS AND STREETS</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Completed</td>
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<tr>
<td>GREENING MILLER</td>
<td>H &amp; H ACCREDITED TRAINING AUSTRALASIA</td>
<td>H &amp; H ACCREDITED TRAINING</td>
<td>ENHANCEMENT OF THE MILLER ENVIRONMENT THROUGH THE MASS PLANTING OF TREES, SHRUBS AND GARDENS ALONG SUBURBAN STREETS. TRAINING IN OH&amp;S, FIRST AID, TREE MAINTENANCE &amp; REPAIR AND HORTICULTURE.</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Completed</td>
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<tr>
<td>LIVERPOOL BUSINESS GROWTH CENTRE EXPANSION - STAGE 1</td>
<td>H &amp; H ACCREDITED TRAINING AUSTRALASIA</td>
<td>H &amp; H ACCREDITED TRAINING</td>
<td>DISMANTLED 2 LIGHT INDUSTRIAL SHEDS THEN TRANSPORTED THEM AND ERECTED THEM AT THE LIVERPOOL BUSINESS GROWTH CENTRE</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>Completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MYRTLE COTTAGE/DIVERSIONAL THERAPY PROGRAM</td>
<td>MISSION AUSTRALIA</td>
<td>MYRTLE COTTAGE INC</td>
<td>SUPPORTED DIVERSIONAL THERAPY PROGRAM. ADDITIONAL ASSISTANCE WITH CRAFT, OUTINGS &amp; TRANSPORTATION</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>MACARTHUR DISTRICT SOFTBALL ASSOCIATION PROJECT</td>
<td>H &amp; H ACCREDITED TRAINING AUSTRALASIA INC</td>
<td>H &amp; H ACCREDITED TRAINING AUSTRALASIA INC</td>
<td>THE PROJECT INVOLVED THE EXTENSION, RENOVATION &amp; IMPROVEMENT OF THE CLUBHOUSE &amp; SOFTBALL GROUND FACILITIES</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMMUNITY INFORMATION PROJECT</td>
<td>H &amp; H ACCREDITED TRAINING AUSTRALASIA INC</td>
<td>H &amp; H ACCREDITED TRAINING AUSTRALASIA INC</td>
<td>PARTICIPANTS ASSISTED IN MARKET RESEARCH RELATING TO THE NEEDS OF COMMUNITY &amp; THE SERVICES AVAILABLE IN LIVERPOOL.</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE HUB MILLER</td>
<td>H &amp; H ACCREDITED TRAINING AUSTRALASIA INC</td>
<td>H &amp; H ACCREDITED TRAINING AUSTRALASIA INC</td>
<td>THE PROJECT CONTINUED THE EXTERNAL REFURBISHMENT/YARD IMPROVEMENT AT THE OLD MILLER POST OFFICE ‘THE HUB’</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Completed</td>
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<tr>
<td>ANIMAL WELFARE LEAGUE ASSISTANCE</td>
<td>H &amp; H ACCREDITED TRAINING AUSTRALASIA INC</td>
<td>H &amp; H ACCREDITED TRAINING AUSTRALASIA INC</td>
<td>PARTICIPANTS ASSISTED IN ACTIVITIES SUCH AS ADMINISTRATION, ANIMAL WELFARE, LANDSCAPING, GARDEN MAINTENANCE.</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Completed</td>
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<tr>
<td>Activity Title</td>
<td>CWC Name</td>
<td>Sponsor Name</td>
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<td>Males Committed</td>
<td>Status</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>AUSTRALASIA INC</td>
<td>GROOMING OF ANIMALS ETC.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GEORGES RIVER CYCLEWAY STAGE 2</td>
<td>H &amp; H ACCREDITED TRAINING</td>
<td>H &amp; H ACCREDITED TRAINING</td>
<td>ASSISTED WITH ESTABLISHMENT OF A WALK/CYCLE WAY WITHIN THE LIVERPOOL AREA. ENHANCED THE ENVIRONMENT BY PLANTING OF TREES, SHRUBS &amp; GRASSES ALONG THE GEORGES RIVER CYCLEWAY</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>Completed</td>
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<tr>
<td>ELOUERA NATURE RESERVE</td>
<td>MISSION AUSTRALIA</td>
<td>MISSION AUSTRALIA</td>
<td>FORMALISED WALKING TRACKS, BUILD NURSERY, RECORDING FAUNA &amp; FLORA, CLEARING WEEDS AND PROVIDING INFO FOR THE MANAGEMENT PLAN</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>Completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INGLEBURN/ MYRTLE COTTAGE 11</td>
<td>MISSION AUSTRALIA</td>
<td>MYRTLE COTTAGE INC</td>
<td>MYRTLE COTTAGE IS A DAY CARE CENTRE FOR THE FRAIL &amp; AGED/DISABLED. PARTICIPANTS PROVIDED SUPPORT TO THE THERAPY PROGRAM ON A DAILY BASIS</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BRICKMAKERS CREEK</td>
<td>MISSION AUSTRALIA</td>
<td>MISSION AUSTRALIA</td>
<td>ECOLOGICAL WORK, PLANTING, LANDSCAPING, ASSESSING NATIVE VEGETATION, WEED REMOVAL, RE-ESTABLISHING NATIVE FLORA AND REMOVAL OF ACCUMULATED RUBBISH IN AND AROUND BRICKMAKERS CREEK</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Completed</td>
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<tr>
<td>JOHN BRUCE PYE FARM</td>
<td>H &amp; H ACCREDITED TRAINING</td>
<td>H &amp; H ACCREDITED TRAINING</td>
<td>UPGRADED FACILITIES AT JOHN BRUCE PYE FARM. PARTICIPANTS INVOLVED IN FENCING AND FARM OPERATIONS</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIVERPOOL HEALTH SERVICE</td>
<td>H &amp; H ACCREDITED TRAINING</td>
<td>H &amp; H ACCREDITED TRAINING</td>
<td>PARTICIPANTS INVOLVED IN DESIGNING AND RE CONSTRUCTING TWO GARDENS TO CREATE A COMFORTABLE AND RELAXING AREA FOR PATIENTS</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Completed</td>
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<tr>
<td>ANIMAL WELFARE LEAGUE - STAGE 2</td>
<td>H &amp; H ACCREDITED TRAINING</td>
<td>H &amp; H ACCREDITED TRAINING</td>
<td>PARTICIPANTS ASSISTED IN ACTIVITIES SUCH AS ADMINISTRATION, ANIMAL WELFARE, GARDEN MAINTENANCE AND GROOMING OF ANIMALS</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Completed</td>
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<tr>
<td>IRELAND PARK</td>
<td>MISSION AUSTRALIA</td>
<td>MISSION EMPLOYMENT GRIEVALLY</td>
<td>CONSTRUCTION OF WALKING TRACKS, RECORDED NATURE FAUNA/FLORA, WEED CLEARING, BUSH REGENERATION, CONSTRUCTION OF BIRD NESTING BOXES</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MYRTLE COTTAGE MARK 2</td>
<td>MISSION AUSTRALIA</td>
<td>MYRTLE COTTAGE INC</td>
<td>PROVIDED SUPPORT TO THE THERAPY PROGRAM ON A DAILY BASIS TO MYRTLE COTTAGE, A DAY CARE CENTRE FOR THE FRAIL AND AGED/DISABLED</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIVERPOOL/MILLER INTRODUCTION TO TRADES</td>
<td>MISSION AUSTRALIA</td>
<td>MISSION AUSTRALIA</td>
<td>INTRODUCTION TO VARIOUS TRADES EG: CARPENTRY, CONCRETING, PAINTING, SOFT LANDSCAPING, CLERICAL AND OH &amp; S</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Current</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAIRFIELD INTRODUCTION TO</td>
<td>MISSION AUSTRALIA</td>
<td>MISSION EMPLOYMENT</td>
<td>PAINTING, GENERAL MAINTENANCE, PLASTERING, SOFT</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Current</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
**Thursday, 30 May 2002**  
**Representatives**  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity Title</th>
<th>CWC Name</th>
<th>Sponsor Name</th>
<th>Activity Description</th>
<th>Females Commenced</th>
<th>Males Commenced</th>
<th>Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trades Project 2</td>
<td>Fairfield Skillshare</td>
<td>Landscaping, Ground Maintenance, Carpentry</td>
<td>This working proudly project involves the improvement of a public recreation facility at Dwyer Oval, Warwick Farm.</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Current</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working Proudly Park Restoration - Dwyer Oval</td>
<td>H &amp; H Accredited Training Australasia Inc</td>
<td>H &amp; H Accredited Training Australasia Inc</td>
<td>Activities such as administration, garden maintenance, animal grooming, etc.</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Current</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animal Welfare League</td>
<td>H &amp; H Accredited Training Australasia Inc</td>
<td>H &amp; H Accredited Training Australasia Inc</td>
<td>Reconstruction of garden beds, landscaping, design and carpentry works at Liverpool Hospital.</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Current</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outdoor Amenities Project</td>
<td>Penrith Skills For Jobs Ltd</td>
<td>Penrith Skills For Jobs Ltd</td>
<td>A range of outdoor activities with community organisations or local councils to enhance facilities for community’s use - design and landscape memorial gardens in cemeteries, bush regeneration of open spaces, construct walkways and simple shelters.</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Current</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Outlook</td>
<td>Uniting Church in Aust Property Trust</td>
<td>Community Support Agency Ltd</td>
<td>Provides a range of office administration, information technology and gardening.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Current</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Myrtle Cottage Mk3</td>
<td>Mission Australia</td>
<td>Myrtle Cottage Inc</td>
<td>Provides support to the therapy program on a daily basis to Myrtle Cottage, a day care centre for the frail and aged/disabled.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Current</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Fairfield and Liverpool Local Government Areas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity Title</th>
<th>CWC Name</th>
<th>Sponsor Name</th>
<th>Activity Description</th>
<th>Females Commenced</th>
<th>Males Commenced</th>
<th>Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Multicultural Community Work Experience</td>
<td>Mission Australia</td>
<td>Mission Australia Fairfield</td>
<td>Provided people of non English speaking background relevant and individualised work experience in a wide range of non profit organisations, churches, hospitals, councils and migrant resource centres.</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gandangara Raised Walkway</td>
<td>Uniting Church in Aust Property Trust</td>
<td>Gandangara Local Aboriginal Land Council</td>
<td>Constructed raised walkways around the cultural centre. Revegetation of degraded tracks and drainage lines.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Initiative</td>
<td>Penrith Skills For Jobs</td>
<td>Penrith Skills For Jobs</td>
<td>A diverse range of indoor and outdoor activities with</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity Title</td>
<td>CWC Name</td>
<td>Sponsor Name</td>
<td>Activity Description</td>
<td>Females Committed</td>
<td>Males Committed</td>
<td>Status</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOVEMBER</td>
<td>JOBS LTD</td>
<td>LTD</td>
<td>COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS OR LOCAL COUNCILS IN WESTERN SYDNEY TASKS INCLUDED OFFICE, ADMINISTRATION, COMPUTER OPERATION, RETAIL, BUILDING AND CONSTRUCTION, CHILD CARE, AGED SERVICES AND LANDSCAPING, GENERAL GARDEN MAINTENANCE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIVERPOOL/FAIRFIELD COMMUNITY ASSISTANCE</td>
<td>H&amp;H ACCREDITED TRAINING</td>
<td>H&amp;H TRAINING</td>
<td>PARTICIPANTS GAINED WORK EXPERIENCE IN ADMINISTRATION ADMINISTRATIVE/ OFFICE POSITIONS AND GENERAL HANDYMAN POSITIONS.</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NATIVE FAUNA AREA</td>
<td>H&amp;H ACCREDITED TRAINING</td>
<td>H&amp;H TRAINING</td>
<td>DESIGN, CONSTRUCTION &amp; IMPLEMENTATION OF; A KANGAROO WALK THROUGH AREA, A HERITAGE WALK DISPLAY OF FARM MACHINERY, PICNIC TABLES AND SHELTERS, BIRD AVIARY, FISHING DAM KANGAROO AND KOALA VIEWING PLATFORM AND NATIVE FAUNA WALK THROUGH AREA</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Completed</td>
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<tr>
<td>WOODLAND RECLAMATION PROJECT</td>
<td>H&amp;H ACCREDITED TRAINING</td>
<td>H&amp;H TRAINING</td>
<td>ASSISTED WITH THE RECLAMATION OF THE LAST 9% OF THE CUMBERLAND PLAINS BUSHLAND THROUGH ERADICATION OF WOODY WEEDS.</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>Completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAIRFIELD CITY MUSEUM</td>
<td>MISSION AUSTRALIA</td>
<td>MISSION AUSTRALIA</td>
<td>THE PRESERVATION OF HISTORICAL ITEMS AND KEEPING OF RECORDS, IDENTIFICATION/ CATALOGUING OF RECORDS, PARTICIPANTS INSTRUCTED IN TECHNIQUES OF DOCUMENT PRESERVATION, STORAGE, DATA ENTRY COLLATION, PHOTOCOPY AND PHOTO COLLECTION.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CATHOLIC SCHOOLS - TEACHER AIDS - FAIRFIELD LIVERPOOL</td>
<td>UNITING CHURCH IN AUST. PROPERTY</td>
<td>CATHOLIC EDUCATION OFFICE</td>
<td>PLACEMENT OF 20 PARTICIPANTS AS TEACHER AIDS IN PRIMARY AND SECONDARY CATHOLIC SCHOOLS IN THE FAIRFIELD/LIVERPOOL LABOUR REGION SYDNEY.</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAIRFIELD MUSEUM / HERITAGE CENTRE MARK 11</td>
<td>MISSION AUSTRALIA</td>
<td>MISSION EMPLOYMENT</td>
<td>PRESERVATION OF HISTORICAL ITEMS AND RECORDS, COLLECTION RESTORATION AND DISPLAY OF ITEMS, PAINTING, SOFT LANDSCAPING, PAVING, MAINTENANCE WORK.</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Completed</td>
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<tr>
<td>CARRAMATTA MULTICULTURAL WORK EXPERIENCE 11</td>
<td>MISSION AUSTRALIA</td>
<td>MISSION EMPLOYMENT</td>
<td>ONE ON ONE PLACEMENT WITHIN THE COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES INCLUDED GARDENING, WAREHOUSING, LANDSCAPING, RECEPTION CLERICAL, DATA ENTRY.</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Completed</td>
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<tr>
<td>CATHOLIC SCHOOLS TEACHER AIDS - FAIRFIELD / LIVERPOOL</td>
<td>UNITING CHURCH IN AUST. PROPERTY</td>
<td>CATHOLIC EDUCATION OFFICE</td>
<td>TEACHER AIDS IN PRIMARY AND SECONDARY CATHOLIC SCHOOLS IN THE FAIRFIELD/LIVERPOOL AREA.</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>Activity Title</td>
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<td>Status</td>
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<tr>
<td>CABRAMATTA MULTICULTURAL WORK EXPERIENCE MARK 3</td>
<td>MISSION AUSTRALIA</td>
<td>MISSION EMPLOYMENT</td>
<td>WORK EXPERIENCE WITHIN THE REGION WITH NOT FOR PROFIT ORGANISATIONS IN CLERICAL, WAREHOUSE, GARDENING, GENERAL OFFICE DUTIES</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Current</td>
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<tr>
<td>FAIRFIELD CITY MUSEUM DEVELOPMENT STAGE 3</td>
<td>MISSION AUSTRALIA</td>
<td>MISSION EMPLOYMENT</td>
<td>PRESERVATION OF HISTORICAL ITEMS &amp; RECORDS, RESTORATION OF ITEMS &amp; DISPLAYS, PAINTING, FURNITURE, PAVING, GARDENING</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Current</td>
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<tr>
<td>LIVERPOOL / FAIRFIELD WORK EXPERIENCE</td>
<td>H &amp; H ACCREDITED TRAINING AUSTRALASIA INC</td>
<td>H &amp; H ACCREDITED TRAINING AUSTRALASIA INC</td>
<td>ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN BY PARTICIPANTS VARY AND MAY INCLUDE ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANCE, BUILDING REPAIRS INCLUDING CARPENTRY TASKS, GRAFFITI REMOVAL, PAINTING, CONSTRUCTION, GYPROCKING, CONCRETING, LANDSCAPING, BUSH REGENERATION, PLANTING OF NATIVE TREES AND THE REMOVAL OF EXOTIC WEEDS</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>45</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Employment: Work for the Dole
(Question No. 257)

Mrs Irwin asked the Minister for Employment Services, upon notice on, 20 March 2002:
What was the total expenditure by the Commonwealth on “Work for the Dole” schemes over the past 2 years.

Mr Brough—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

• Administered expenses for the Work for the Dole programme for the last two financial years:
  1999 – 2000 financial year expenses were $76,612,000.
  2000 – 2001 financial year expenses were $113,436,000.

• Departmental expenses for the Work for the Dole programme for the last two financial years:
  1999 – 2000 financial year expenses were $11,807,000.
  2000 – 2001 financial year expenses were $15,872,000.

Tough on Drugs Strategy
(Question No. 258)

Mrs Irwin asked the Minister representing the Minister for Health and Ageing, upon notice, on 20 March 2002:
(1) Since the beginning of the “Tough on Drugs” program, what projects based in the (a) Fairfield and (b) Liverpool, NSW local government areas have received funding under the program.
(2) What funding has each project received.
(3) What agency is responsible for each project.

Mr Andrews—The Minister for Health and Ageing has provided the following answer to the honourable member’s question:

Non-Government Organisation Treatment Grants Program
As part of the “Tough on Drugs” program, no projects based in the Fairfield and Liverpool, NSW local government areas have received funding.

Community Partnerships Initiative
(1) As part of the “Tough on Drugs” program, one project based in the Fairfield, NSW local government area has received funding. That project is “No is not enough”. No projects based in the Liverpool, NSW local government area have received funding.
(2) The “No is not enough” project received $78,736 over two years.
(3) The Cabramatta Community Centre is responsible for this project.

COAG Illicit Drug Diversion Initiative
(1) In May 2000, the New South Wales Government and the Commonwealth Government jointly signed a four-year agreement regarding funding of $31.8 million for a range of programs in New South Wales under the COAG Illicit Drug Diversion Initiative. Funding is via Bill 2 directly to the New South Wales Government.

One of those programs, the Youth Drug Court program, commenced on a trial basis on 31 July 2000 and operates out of two Children’s Courts, Cobbah Children’s Court (Penrith) and the Campbelltown Children’s Court covering the primary catchment area of Western and South Western Sydney.

(2) The South Western Sydney Area Health Service receives $600,000 per annum as a Commonwealth/State preferred provider of a range of assessment and treatment services for Youth Drug Court clients. Part of this range of services is a six bed residential facility in Fairfield for the stabilisation and assessment of young people referred by the Youth Drug Courts.
(3) The New South Wales Departments of Juvenile Justice, Health, Education and Training and Community Services are jointly responsible for operating the program.
Tough on Drugs Strategy
(Question No. 259)

Mrs Irwin asked the Minister representing the Minister for Health and Ageing, upon notice, on 20 March 2002:
What is the total government expenditure under the “Tough on Drugs” program.

Mr Andrews—The Minister for Health and Ageing has provided the following answer to the honourable member’s question:
The Prime Minister launched the “Tough on Drugs” National Illicit Drug Strategy in November 1997. Since its launch, the Commonwealth Government has allocated $516 million to the Strategy for a balanced package of measures aimed at law enforcement, education, treatment and research.
On 7 December 2001 Senator the Hon Kay Patterson, the Minister for Health and Ageing, confirmed the Federal Government’s commitment to the “Tough on Drugs” program and announced the allocation of a further $109 million over four years.

Aviation: Ansett Australia
(Question No. 261)

Mrs Crosio asked the Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations, upon notice on, 20 March 2002:
(1) Has he received advice from the Ansett administrators regarding the amount of entitlements owed to individual former employees of Ansett Australia; if so, when was this advice received and what is the estimated total sum of entitlements owed to Ansett employees.
(2) What is the total sum raised so far from the $10 levy on air tickets.
(3) For how long will the $10 levy remain on air tickets.
(4) What, if any, sum of Commonwealth money will he commit to paying the entitlements of former Ansett workers.
(5) Will individual former Ansett employees receive 100 per cent of their accrued entitlements.

Mr Abbott—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:
(1) No. Advice on the entitlements owed to individual former employees is provided by the Ansett Administrators to SEES Pty Ltd which is administering the SEESA arrangements.
(2) and (3) These are matters for the Minister for Transport and Regional Services.
(4) The Air Passenger Ticket Levy Collection Act provides up to $500m for Special Employee Entitlements Scheme for Ansett employees (SEESA) payments.
(5) SEESA makes payments equivalent to all unpaid wages, accrued annual leave, long service leave, payment in lieu of notice of redundancy and redundancy pay up to the community standard of eight weeks.

Tough on Drugs Strategy
(Question No. 275)

Ms Jann McFarlane asked the Minister representing the Minister for Health and Ageing, upon notice, on 21 March 2002:
(1) Since the beginning of the “Tough on Drugs” program, what projects based in the electoral division of Stirling have received funding under the program.
(2) What funding has each project received.
(3) What agency is responsible for each project.

Mr Andrews—The Minister for Health and Ageing has provided the following answer to the honourable member’s question:
(1) to (3) No projects based in the electoral division of Stirling have received funding under the “Tough on Drugs” program.
Kirribilli House and The Lodge: Renovations
(Question No. 276)

Mrs Crosio asked the Prime Minister, upon notice, on 21 March 2002:

(1) What renovations or additions requiring the services of trade specialists have been made to the buildings and grounds of (a) Kirribilli House and (b) The Lodge in (a) 2001, (b) 2000, (c) 1999, (d) 1998 and (e) 1997.

(2) What was the cost of each renovation in terms of (a) new materials and (b) labour.

(3) What sum of Commonwealth money has been used to carry out the work.

(4) What future renovations for Kirribilli House and The Lodge have been approved or planned for 2002.

Mr Howard—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1)-(3) I am advised by my department that much of the information sought in relation to the period 1997 to 1999 has been provided in my answers to several previous parliamentary questions including question numbers 976, 977 and 979 published in the Senate Hansard on 1 September 1999 (pp 8184-8185).

The detail requested in the question in relation to trade specialists and material and labour costs is not readily available or the information cannot be identified separately. To collect and assemble such information solely for the purpose of answering the question would be a major task and I am not prepared to authorise the expenditure of resources that would be required.

I can, however, advise that total expenditure on maintenance and conservation at the official residences for the past two financial years has been:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1999-2000</td>
<td>$630,770</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000-2001</td>
<td>$589,971</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above amounts include all repairs, renovations, restorations and maintenance of the buildings, grounds and furniture and fittings.

Total expenditure at the official residences, The Lodge and Kirribilli House, during my term of office to 30 June 2000 was $5,328,069. In addition to maintenance and conservation costs, this amount includes all wages and household and administrative costs.

By comparison, over the same period of time during the term of office of former Prime Minister Keating, the equivalent expenditure was $5,933,866.

A more up to date comparison is not available due to the unreliability of programme expenditure figures prior to December 1991.

(4) Some maintenance and conservation works are planned for The Lodge and Kirribilli House in 2002. The proposed projects are required to maintain the residences in an appropriate manner including consideration of the practicality of the houses and level of amenity and the public’s view of their adequacy, style, standard and presentation.

The works planned have been recommended by the Official Establishments Trust and, where appropriate, will be undertaken with special regard for the requirements of authorities and organisations concerned with the National Estate.