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SITTING DAYS—2003

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- **SYDNEY**: 630 AM
- **NEWCASTLE**: 1458 AM
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- **MELBOURNE**: 1026 AM
- **ADELAIDE**: 972 AM
- **PERTH**: 585 AM
- **HOBART**: 729 AM
- **DARWIN**: 102.5 FM
FORTIETH PARLIAMENT
FIRST SESSION—SIXTH PERIOD

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

House of Representatives Officeholders
Speaker—The Hon. John Neil Andrew MP
Deputy Speaker—The Hon. Ian Raymond Causley MP
Second Deputy Speaker—Mr Harry Alfred Jenkins MP
Members of the Speaker’s Panel—Mr David Peter Maxwell Hawker, Mr Philip Anthony Barresi, Ms Teresa Gambaro, Mr Peter John Lindsay, Hon. Bruce Craig Scott, Hon. Dick Godfrey Harry Adams, Mr Frank William Mossfield AM, Hon. Leo Roger Spurway Price, Mr Kimberley William Wilkie, Ms Ann Kathleen Corcoran

Leader of the House—The Hon. Anthony John Abbott MP
Deputy Leader of the House—The Hon. Peter John McGauran MP
Manager of Opposition Business—Mr Mark Latham MP
Deputy Manager of Opposition Business—Ms Julia Gillard MP

Party Leaders and Whips
Liberal Party of Australia
Leader—The Hon. John Winston Howard MP
Deputy Leader—The Hon. Peter Howard Costello MP
Chief Government Whip—Mr James Eric Lloyd MP
Government Whips—Mrs Joanna Gash MP and Mr Fergus Stewart McArthur MP

National Party of Australia
Leader—The Hon. John Duncan Anderson MP
Deputy Leader—The Hon. Mark Anthony James Vaile MP
Whip—Mr John Alexander Forrest MP
Assistant Whip—Mr Paul Christopher Neville MP

Australian Labor Party
Leader—The Hon. Simon Findlay Crean MP
Deputy Leader—The Hon. Jennifer Louise Macklin MP
Chief Opposition Whip—The Hon. Janice Ann Crosio MBE MP
Opposition Whips—Mr Michael Dunby MP and Mr Harry Vernon Quick MP

Printed by authority of the House of Representatives
### Members of the House of Representatives

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<th>Division</th>
<th>Party</th>
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<tr>
<td>Williams, Hon. Daryl Robert</td>
<td>Tangney, WA</td>
<td>LP</td>
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<td>Libraries</td>
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<tr>
<td>Windsor, Antony Harold Curties</td>
<td>New England, NSW</td>
<td>Ind.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Worth, Hon. Patricia Mary</td>
<td>Adelaide, SA</td>
<td>LP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Zahra, Christian John</td>
<td>McMillan, Vic</td>
<td>ALP</td>
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PARTY ABBREVIATIONS
ALP—Australian Labor Party; LP—Liberal Party of Australia; NPA—National Party of Australia; Ind.—Independent; CLP—Country Liberal Party; AG—Australian Greens

Heads of Parliamentary Departments

Clerk of the Senate—H. Evans
Clerk of the House of Representatives—I.C. Harris
Departmental Secretary, Parliamentary Library—J.W. Templeton
Departmental Secretary, Parliamentary Reporting Staff—J.W. Templeton
Departmental Secretary, Joint House Department—M.W. Bolton
**HOWARD MINISTRY**

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<td>Prime Minister</td>
<td>The Hon. John Winston Howard MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Transport and Regional Services and Deputy Prime Minister</td>
<td>The Hon. John Duncan Anderson MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treasurer</td>
<td>The Hon. Peter Howard Costello MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Trade</td>
<td>The Hon. Mark Anthony James Vaile MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Defence and Leader of the Government in the Senate</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Robert Murray Hill</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Communications, Information Technology and the Arts and Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Richard Kenneth Robert Alston</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Foreign Affairs</td>
<td>The Hon. Alexander John Gosse Downer MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service and Leader of the House</td>
<td>The Hon. Anthony John Abbott MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Reconciliation</td>
<td>The Hon. Philip Maxwell Ruddock MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for the Environment and Heritage and Vice-President of the Executive Council</td>
<td>The Hon. Dr David Alistair Kemp MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attorney-General</td>
<td>The Hon. Daryl Robert Williams AM, QC, MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Finance and Administration</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Nicholas Hugh Minchin</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry</td>
<td>The Hon. Warren Errol Truss MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Family and Community Services and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Status of Women</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Amanda Eloise Vanstone</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Education, Science and Training</td>
<td>The Hon. Dr Brendan John Nelson MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Health and Ageing</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Kay Christine Lesley Patterson</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Industry, Tourism and Resources</td>
<td>The Hon. Ian Elgin Macfarlane MP</td>
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*(The above ministers constitute the cabinet)*
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Minister for Justice and Customs
Senator the Hon. Christopher Martin Ellison

Minister for Fisheries, Forestry and Conservation
Senator the Hon. Ian Douglas Macdonald

Minister for the Arts and Sport
Senator the Hon. Charles Roderick Kemp

Minister for Small Business and Tourism
The Hon. Joseph Benedict Hockey MP

Minister for Science and Deputy Leader of the House
The Hon. Peter John McGauran MP

Minister for Regional Services, Territories and Local Government
The Hon. Charles Wilson Tuckey MP

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs
The Hon. Lawrence James Anthony MP

Minister for Employment Services
The Hon. Malcolm Thomas Brough MP

Special Minister of State
Senator the Hon. Eric Abetz

Minister for Veterans’ Affairs and Minister Assisting the Minister for Defence
The Hon. Danna Sue Vale MP

Minister for Revenue and Assistant Treasurer
Senator the Hon. Helen Coonan

Minister for Ageing
The Hon. Kevin James Andrews MP

Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister
The Hon. Gary Douglas Hardgrave MP

Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Transport and Regional Services
The Hon. Jacqueline Marie Kelly MP

Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasurer and Manager of Government Business in the Senate
Senator the Hon. Ronald Leslie Doyle Boswell

Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Foreign Affairs
Senator the Hon. Ian Gordon Campbell

Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Defence
The Hon. Christine Ann Gallus MP

Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for the Environment and Heritage
The Hon. Frances Esther Bailey MP

Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Finance and Administration
The Hon. Dr Sharman Nancy Stone MP

Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
The Hon. Peter Neil Slipper MP

Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Family and Community Services
Senator the Hon. Judith Mary Troeth

Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Health and Ageing
The Hon. Ross Alexander Cameron MP

Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Industry, Tourism and Resources
The Hon. Patricia Mary Worth MP

Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Foreign Affairs
The Hon. Warren George Entsch MP
<table>
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<tr>
<td>Leader of the Opposition</td>
<td>The Hon. Simon Findlay Crean MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deputy Leader of the Opposition and Shadow</td>
<td>Jenny Macklin MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Employment, Education and Training and Science</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leader of the Opposition in the Senate, Shadow</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. John Philip Faulkner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Minister of State and Shadow Minister for Home Affairs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Senate and Shadow</td>
<td>Senator Stephen Conroy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Trade, Corporate Governance, Financial Services and</td>
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<tr>
<td>Small Business</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Employment Services and Training</td>
<td>Anthony Albanese MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Veterans’ Affairs and</td>
<td>Senator Mark Bishop</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Customs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Industry, Innovation, Science and Research</td>
<td>Senator Kim Carr</td>
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<tr>
<td>and Shadow Minister for the Public Service</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Children and Youth</td>
<td>Senator Jacinda Collins</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Assistant Treasurer</td>
<td>David Cox MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Ageing and Seniors and</td>
<td>Annette Ellis MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assisting the Shadow Minister for Disabilities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Workplace Relations</td>
<td>Craig Emerson MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Defence</td>
<td>Senator Chris Evans</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs</td>
<td>Laurie Ferguson MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Urban and Regional</td>
<td>Martin Ferguson MP</td>
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<td>Development and Shadow Minister for Transport and</td>
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<td>Infrastructure</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Resources and Shadow</td>
<td>Joel Fitzgibbon MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Tourism</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Health and Deputy Manager of Opposition Business</td>
<td>Julia Gillard MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Consumer Protection and</td>
<td>Alan Griffin MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Consumer Health</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Treasurer and Manager of Opposition Business</td>
<td>Mark Latham MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Information Technology,</td>
<td>Senator Kate Lundy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Sport and Shadow Minister for the Arts</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Attorney-General and Shadow Minister for Justice and</td>
<td>Robert McClelland MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Security</td>
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Shadow Minister for Cabinet and Finance and Shadow Minister for Reconciliation and Indigenous Affairs
Bob McMullan MP

Shadow Minister for Heritage and Territories
Daryl Melham MP

Shadow Minister for Primary Industries
Senator Kerry O’Brien

Shadow Minister for Regional Services, Shadow Minister for Local Government and Shadow Minister for Housing
Gavan O’Connor MP

Shadow Minister for Population and Immigration and Shadow Minister Assisting the Leader on the Status of Women
Nicola Roxon MP

Shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs
Kevin Rudd MP

Shadow Minister for Retirement Incomes and Savings
Senator the Hon. Nick Sherry

Shadow Minister for Family and Community Services
Wayne Swan MP

Shadow Minister for Communications
Lindsay Tanner MP

Shadow Minister for Sustainability and the Environment
Kelvin Thomson MP

Parliamentary Secretary (Manufacturing Industries)
Senator George Campbell

Parliamentary Secretary (Defence)
The Hon. Graham Edwards MP

Parliamentary Secretary (Family and Community Services)
Senator Michael Forshaw

Parliamentary Secretary (Sustainability and the Environment) and Parliamentary Secretary (Heritage)
Kirsten Livermore MP

Parliamentary Secretary (Attorney-General) and Manager of Opposition Business in the Senate
Senator Joseph Ludwig

Parliamentary Secretary (Leader of the Opposition)
John Murphy MP

Parliamentary Secretary (Communications)
Michelle O’Byrne MP

Parliamentary Secretary (Primary Industries)
Sid Sidebottom MP

Parliamentary Secretary (Northern Australia and the Territories) and Parliamentary Secretary (Reconciliation)
The Hon. Warren Snowdon MP

Parliamentary Secretary (Regional Development, Transport, Infrastructure and Tourism)
Christian Zahra MP
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The SPEAKER (Mr Neil Andrew) took the chair at 12.30 p.m., and read prayers.

PRIVATE MEMBERS’ BUSINESS
Mortgage Finance

Mr KING (Wentworth) (12.31 p.m.)—I move:

That this House:

(1) notes the importance to Australian families who are new home buyers of clear and fair arrangements for the entry into mortgages;

(2) notes the recent calls by industry leaders for legislation for the finance broking industry to put in place an accredited licensing scheme; and

(3) commends the Commonwealth Government and Australia’s mortgage finance industry for their cooperative action in identifying measures including uniform legislation.

I hope that, as a result of this motion, other comments, pressure and lobbying, further legislation will ensue. The issue of housing affordability is of the utmost importance. It is back in focus not because of high interest rates and deficient economic management, such as occurred under the last Labor government, but rather because interest rates are now at their lowest level for 20 years—and there is a possibility that the Reserve Bank may further reduce interest rates—and because of the surge in house prices as a result of sound economic management.

The government has already taken one major step to address this issue: last week it commissioned the Productivity Commission to report on the question of home affordability. This report is due in March next year. The Treasurer has identified proper cost savings for buyers by calling on states to reduce burdensome and inequitable stamp duties, land taxes and other impost of a like nature. The Reserve Bank can, in my respectful view, take proper steps in the same regard by reducing interest rates in its current deliberations. The suggestion by some economists that such a move would be deflationary and threaten recession, such as has occurred in Japan, is too cautious. Such views have been rejected by the Federal Reserve in the United States and by Europe’s central bankers. Moreover, it does not necessarily follow that a fall in interest rates will inflate prices in the current context. In any event, depending on how the major lenders structure any interest rate decline, it does not necessarily follow that there will be a higher repayment rate, which is at the crux of the issue.

The motion before the House focuses on the need for governments, both state and federal, to take measures to address irregularities in the marketplace which, in some cases, massively distort prices and repayment schedules and, in many other cases, lead to unfairness and significant additional costs for the consumer. It is important to recognise the significant role that finance brokers and mortgage brokers play in the industry and the contribution they have made over the last five to 10 years, in which they have really emerged as a force in financial circles in this country. That role has been to enhance competition and to enter into negotiations with the major banks on a basis which ordinary consumers could not achieve. To some extent, increased housing affordability can be credited to those brokers and those persons who have led the way in this industry. But there are some brokers who have brought a bad reputation to the market as it has become more lucrative. They have sought to exploit what is a new and essentially unregulated marketplace in unscrupulous and, unfortunately, in some cases, dishonest ways.

I was first alerted to the problems of these irregularities by two disturbing accounts from constituents who came to see me at my office. In one case, which was particularly disgraceful, the mortgage broker had grossly
misrepresented both the value of the property and the cost and structure of repayments for the borrower. After realising his errors, the borrower was unable to meet either the repayments or indeed the capital impost. He lost his property and is currently facing bankruptcy. The regrettable aspect of this case is that the mortgage broker had in some way been linked to one of the major lending banks, although it is difficult at this stage to determine it precisely. I wrote to the bank more than three months ago seeking an explanation but unfortunately, at this stage, have not received one. I have also been approached by two significant lenders concerned that the reputation of and confidence in the industry have been waning. So from the point of view of both the consumers and the lenders it is absolutely necessary that there be in place a regime which is going to instil confidence in the housing industry and ensure that those responsible for lending are honest and lend on the best terms available in the marketplace. It is in this context that, it seems to me at least, there needs to be a system of licensing and also a better, inexpensive due process for dealing with claims, especially claims from persons with fewer means than others.

The concerns of the community, both lenders and borrowers, are reasonably well known. But let me mention one or two of them, because I think it is important in this context to appreciate what this is about. In particular, the use of commissions as the dominant method of remuneration for brokers has meant that there have been conflicts of interest emerging which do not occur in other areas of the lending industry. The consumer may not receive information about the nature of services provided by the broker or their rights in relation to those services. The consumer may rely on recommendations of a broker who is influenced by a conflict of interest, but that conflict may not be disclosed. The consumer may rely on recommendations made where the broker does not have a reasonable basis for them due to the failure of the broker to properly consider the consumers’ needs, objectives and financial circumstances or even to research a range of loans or credit facilities and offer alternatives. The consumer may enter into a contract which is unfair in that it commits the consumer to paying considerable fees—normally not disclosed—limits the capacity to shop around and contains very few protections which exist in other areas of the lending industries. Finally, effective and easily accessible remedies are not available, in the manner that I have just described.

It is in this context that there is a real community need for something to be done, and it is pleasing to note that the industry itself has set about addressing these problems. In August 2002, following submissions made to ASIC by both consumers and lenders, ASIC’s Consumer Advisory Panel recommended that a report be commissioned by ASIC, which then requested the New South Wales Consumer Credit Legal Centre—a state body under its aegis—report on issues in the mortgage and finance broking industries. That report was produced in March 2003 and it was an important report in this particular area.

One of the purposes of this motion before the House is to highlight that report and also the concerns of my constituents, consumers and lenders, to whom I made reference a short while ago, and, as a result of that, to bring about a fairer and more equitable marketplace—one in which housing affordability is available on an equal basis to all Australians. Amongst others, Aussie Home Loans managing director, John Symond, welcomed the report that was produced in March and called for unaccredited brokers to be thrown out of the industry. Aussie John is a tough man, but he is also a fair one. Mark Bouris of
Wizard praised the ASIC report and called for clarity on the roles of brokers. It is in this context that I encourage the House to give urgent consideration to this and to support the industry and government in setting about these matters. The time has come to do something about it. It should be done now; it should not be delayed any further. I support the motion.

The SPEAKER—Is the motion seconded?

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

Ms HALL (Shortland) (12.41 p.m.)—This is a time in Australia’s history when it is important for the government to act to ensure that the information in relation to mortgages is clear, transparent and fair. In addition, it is a time when the government needs to act to ensure equal access to the housing market for first home buyers. Currently, housing affordability is at its lowest level in 13 years, which means it is harder and harder for first home buyers to enter the housing market. The price of houses has skyrocketed throughout Australia. I refer to the June quarter housing report which showed that there had been a 12 per cent rise in house price affordability in that quarter. The Commonwealth Bank-HIA housing affordability index for Australia fell by 9.3 per cent in the June quarter. Interest rates remain on hold, but, compared to 12 months ago, affordability of houses has declined by 17.8 per cent. This is of great concern to us on this side of the House, as are the other issues detailed in the motion.

The Sydney papers today say that only 10 per cent of home buyers in Sydney are first home buyers, and that is of great concern. Affordability fell by 6.5 per cent in Sydney and by 9.6 per cent in the rest of New South Wales, so it is of real concern that the issue of affordability is such that very few new home buyers can actually enter the market. The loan repayments on a typical first home mortgage range from $1,409 to $1,581 a month. That absorbs 25.3 per cent of the average household income—2.6 per cent more than the previous quarter. So that really is a concern, and I urge the government to show some leadership in this area.

It is a concern for all Australians, because all Australians are affected by the affordability of housing. Young Australians are facing the prospect of never being able to afford a home, and those families who have large mortgages are really concerned about the way this impacts on their living standard. When the high price of housing is coupled with low interest rates and large, and to some degree, unregulated mortgages we have a recipe for disaster. All it takes is a rise in interest rates and many of those people committed to repaying large mortgages will find themselves in financial difficulties.

There has been considerable concern expressed by both financial institutions and individual homebuyers about the use of mortgage brokers, as well as the unregulated nature of the mortgage-broking industry. Both APRA and ASIC have indicated their concerns about the fast growth of the mortgage-broking industry and the lack of regulation. In January this year, APRA identified the growth of the industry and the need for tighter controls. APRA said that the mortgage brokers are now writing 23 per cent of all home loans. APRA also identified that brokers can mislead banks and that there is no proper regulation in place to ensure this does not happen. It wants tighter controls, including stricter accreditation rules.

ASIC has found that while consumers’ use of brokerages expanded greatly, there are still few barriers to entry into the industry and few controls. A report by the Consumer Credit Legal Centre in New South Wales
identified poor advice, increasing costs, inadequate disclosure and many other issues that need to be addressed. The government’s response has been to flick the issue to the states while giving tacit support to national uniform legislation.

The New South Wales government introduced the Consumer Credit Administration Amendments (Finance Brokers) Bill into parliament in April this year in response to this report. Unfortunately, the Howard government is always taking refuge behind blaming the states. It has not shown leadership in really working to get that national uniform legislation. We need national uniform legislation. We want the government to show leadership and to actually bring about legislation that will ensure that this industry is properly regulated. *(Time expired)*

Mr PEARCE (Aston) *(12.46 p.m.)*—As the member for the electorate of Aston, which has one of the highest rates of home ownership in Australia, the issue of home mortgages is something that I feel very passionate about and is the reason why I seconded this important motion moved by my colleague the honorable member for Wentworth.

It is an often repeated phrase but it is clear that home ownership continues to be an integral part of the so-called great Aussie dream. The Commonwealth government appreciate that home ownership is highly valued by Australian families and individuals. The ability to achieve home ownership continues to be of vital importance in maintaining family and social stability. I am proud to say that this government share these values and that is why we have been working hard to help more Australian families to live and achieve the great Aussie dream. The government also recognise that Australian families that own their own homes have invested a very significant proportion of their finances into their home. In fact, the family home is the most significant asset that most people ever acquire in their lifetime and represents around two-thirds of all household wealth in our country.

When we consider the factors that affect the ability of Australian families to own their own homes, it is clear that the federal government has provided greater opportunities than ever before. This government has also helped Australian workers and their families by giving them greater means to actually own their own home. Since the government came to office in 1996 over one million new jobs have been created, which has meant more Aussies have the chance of owning their own home. By keeping inflation low through prudent economic management, the government has overseen significant increases in real wages for all Australian workers, and particularly lower-paid workers. This means that Australians have had a greater ability to purchase; they have had greater purchasing power. Indeed, that is what has helped them achieve their own home. Through the tax reform process, the government has helped Australian workers keep more of their hard-earned dollars—dollars which, of course, are available for them to buy their home.

A very important determinant for families seeking to buy their own homes is home loan interest rates. The last time I looked home loan interest rates were around 6½ per cent, which is a 20-year low. Correct me if I am wrong: when the Howard government came to office—after 13 years of Labor government—home loan interest rates were 10½ per cent. That is four percentage points higher than today. Furthermore, the last time Labor held my seat of Aston—which was in 1990 at the height of Labor’s term in office—I regret to tell you, Mr Speaker, home loan interest rates reached a massive 17 per cent. Let us compare the impact of this on
Australian families; let us compare the difference between paying 17 per cent and 6½ per cent. If a family had a loan of $100,000 in 1990 compared to the same loan today, they would have paid an incredible $10,450 per year more in interest costs—or, if you like, $871 per month more in interest costs than they would today. Members opposite do not like to hear it, Mr Speaker, but it is a fact: $871 per month more if Labor was still in government. Therefore, that family has $871 per month more in disposable income to enjoy.

Given the fact that most Australian families use mortgage finance to purchase their homes, the conduct of the mortgage finance industry is an important factor. The federal government is concerned that consumers are exposed to shortcomings and, therefore, the regulation of mortgage brokers is a very important area; an area that needs a uniform national approach. The federal government, through the Ministerial Council on Consumer Affairs, is assisting the states and territories to develop a model that is consistent and uniform across Australia and that will, again, help families. The federal government has also recently asked the Productivity Commission to again look at this important area and to do whatever it can to identify any areas of impediments. It is another example of how the Howard government has been helping and assisting families since 1996 to actually live out and achieve the great Australian dream of owning our own family home. (Time expired)

Mr Griffin (Bruce) (12.51 p.m.)—It would be remiss of me not to briefly make a couple of points on the representations made by the member for Aston. The point here is housing affordability, and the issue is that we have now seen figures which indicate that housing affordability is at its lowest level for a long, long time. When you talk about interest rates, you have also got to talk about levels of debt. The fact is that under this government we have seen Australian families trapped into a debt binge that means any interest rate increases—and they will come, as you well know—are going to have a severely detrimental effect on a range of Australian families.

To the issue at hand—one might have been confused by it when hearing most of the earlier speaker’s remarks—which is mortgage brokers and the motion moved by the member for Wentworth. I agree with points 1 and 2 of the member’s motion but I have some issues around point 3, which commends the Commonwealth government around the issue of action in this area. This is an example of what we have seen under consumer affairs with this government, which is effectively a hands off approach and, on some occasions, has almost been a hands up approach. The bottom line is that this is an area that has cried out for quite some time for national action to be taken—and national action is not what we have seen until very recently.

It has taken things like the finance and mortgage broker industry report, which was prepared by the Consumer Credit Legal Centre in New South Wales and released by ASIC on 16 March. The report showed that there were many problems facing consumers in this area, such as poor advice with the increased costs of the inappropriate loans that might result, inadequate disclosure of fees and commissions by some brokers, inconsistent documentation from brokers, uncertainty about the nature and price of the service and fraudulent activity such as manipulating loan applications. There are a range of case studies in the report, which highlight just how some brokers have been behaving. I believe they are a minority of the industry, but I certainly agree with the calls from almost all concerned, including the industry itself, that there is a need for uniform national regula-
tion in this area. That is certainly something the Labor state governments have been keen to pursue. It is something that the Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasurer, Senator Ian Campbell, was quite reluctant to support, as I understand it, although he has recently made comments that the Commonwealth was prepared to play a strong facilitative role. The fact of the matter, though, is that this is one of those issues that really do require a national focus. No-one is in a better position to do that than the federal government, and it needs that focus to be developed and maintained.

That is not what we have seen—not so far. We have seen recent examples of similar areas; for instance, at the ministerial council meeting just the other day there was a proposal made regarding the question of property investment schemes and brokers in that area and the get rich quick schemes that have been running around. The reaction from the Commonwealth when it was first mentioned was again hands off, hands up: ‘It is not our issue. If the states want to try and move that across to us, then there will obviously be costs involved.’ As a result of that meeting, there are further steps being taken to try and look at that issue on a national level. That is a good thing but it does relate to wider issues about credit matters under the uniform consumer credit code and it does point to the fact that there needs to be more work done to try and address some of these issues on a national basis.

What we are seeing in financial areas now is a situation where there is greater flexibility. In itself that is in many respects a very good thing. But at the same time we are also seeing, in some respects, unscrupulous operators being prepared to move jurisdictions, to forum shop, in order to try and put themselves in a situation where they can maximise their opportunity to do Australian consumers harm. That is why we need to make sure there is that national focus. That is why this federal government needs to take up the cudgels on behalf of the Australian people to ensure that these sorts of people are dealt with. This process with respect to this issue is a step in the right direction but it could have been faster and there are certainly other issues in this area that need to be taken up. I urge this government to do something more about it and to get in line with the Australian Labor Party state governments to ensure that action is taken to try and deal with these very important issues.

Mr FARMER (Macarthur) (12.56 p.m.)—Owning a home is the great Australian dream. When I purchased my first home, I had to sell myself to the bank. I had to prove to them that I was worthy of their business. How times have changed! Today we have the banks trying to prove to us that they are worthy of our business. With the amount of competition out there from the finance broking industry, the banks have no other option but to be competitive. The finance broking industry is more than ever before becoming the preferred choice when obtaining a home loan. That is why I too move that this House note the importance to Australian families who are new home owners—like the young families I represent in the areas of Campbelltown and Macarthur—of clear and fair arrangements for the entry into mortgages.

When I applied for my first home loan, I had very little idea of what to do or how to do it. There was very little advice in the media; the banks pretty much had it all sewn up. I first had to find a bank that would lend me the money and then the rest was up to me. I had to find solicitors as well as all the other professionals that were required as part of buying a house. Then I had to wait nearly four weeks to get the approval for the loan, unlike today. Thanks to the print, audio and visual media and the Internet, consumers are
being more and more aware of their options and their rights when purchasing a home. First home owners are now more educated than ever. I visited a website the other day to see how things had changed since I applied for my first home loan. One lender offered, as a prospective client, to pay for my building insurance and provide me with a credit card with a rate of less than six per cent for six months if my application were accepted. This would never have happened 20 years ago. They did not need to offer me incentives to take their business back then.

I welcome the recent report on the mortgage broking industry released by ASIC in March. The report, prepared by the Consumer Credit Legal Centre, found that the number of people using mortgage brokers is increasing. In fact, 80 per cent of all home loans in Perth are from mortgage brokers. This report also highlighted problems that the industry is still facing today. These problems include poor advice with the increased cost of the inappropriate loans that might result, inadequate disclosure of fees and commissions by some brokers, inconsistent documentation from brokers, uncertainty about the price and nature of the service and the possibility of fraudulent activity such as manipulating loan applications.

When a person borrows for the first time, they need to know the cost and the conditions, which is why I too commend the Commonwealth government and Australia’s mortgage finance industry for their cooperative action in identifying measures, including uniform legislation. It is important that borrowers know that they are being professionally looked after and also that they choose a member of the Mortgage Industry Association of Australia. A MIAA member is bound by a strict code of practice. I ask that the House note the recent calls by industry leaders for legislation for the finance broking industry to put into place an accredited licensing scheme. Considering that up to one out of every two home loans is sourced through brokers, it is important that the finance broking industry is held accountable. New home buyers should be able to go to a broker with confidence, knowing that they will be made aware of the cost, as well as the avenues that they need to follow should something go wrong. I ask that the House note the importance to Australian families who are new home buyers of clear and fair arrangements for the entry into mortgages. I commend the motion moved by the member for Wentworth to the House.

The SPEAKER—Order! The time allotted for this debate has expired. The debate is adjourned and the resumption of the debate will be made an order of the day for the next sitting. I am presuming that the member for Macarthur has concluded his speech.

Mr Farmer—Yes, Mr Speaker.

Australian Maritime College

Ms O’BYRNE (Bass) (1.01 p.m.)—I move:

That this House:

(1) notes the pivotal role undertaken by the Australian Maritime College in providing maritime education and research;

(2) further notes the high standard of training the College provides overseas students; and

(3) calls upon the Government to act immediately to honour its election commitment regarding university status for the College.

It has now been over a year since I first asked the House to consider the motion that is before us, a motion which allows for the recognition of the Australian Maritime College. It ‘notes the pivotal role undertaken by the Australian Maritime College in providing maritime education and research’, ‘notes the high standard of training the college provides overseas students’ and ‘calls upon the government to act immediately to honour its election commitment regarding university
status for the college’. But in any discussion of the maritime industry I must take the opportunity to acknowledge the decision last week in the High Court that now awards workers on all ships that are working within Australian waters, whether they are foreign owned or Australian, the same industrial awards and conditions as those of almost any other industry—a situation that urgently required review—and takes away the ability of a shipping company to sack its crew and replace it with lower paid foreign-flag crews.

The Australian Maritime College, which is in my electorate, is without a doubt a centre of excellence and one that Tasmanians and indeed all Australians should be proud of. I pay tribute to the work of Lance Barnard in securing that college for Launceston. The Australian Maritime College has a natural advantage in providing maritime education to the rising nations throughout the area and plays a major role in the Australian shipping industry. Government has a key role to play in this. It determines funding levels for education priorities and it determines the policy and fiscal framework in which industries like the Australian shipping industry operate. The Maritime College is doubly dependent on government delivering both the right maritime policy and the right education policy: the right maritime policy framework to ensure that the shipping industry prospers and the right education policy to enable this college to provide future crews with the skills that they need. So the government must establish a fiscal regime that will allow Australia to compete with foreign shipping and, importantly, an educational environment to allow the college to grow and compete effectively.

The college undertakes groundbreaking research such as in marine hydrodynamics, which is looking at things such as predicting the performance of high-speed marine vehicles in varying conditions, as well as techniques to improve the performance of yachts and yacht safety. It is also undertaking research into fisheries biology and ecology, sustainable fishing practices, fisheries economics and fish behaviour. The college trains some of the best crews in the world, a finding that has come from the Seafarers International Research Centre in Cardiff.

In the lead-up to the last election, the federal government gave the electors of Bass and also the AMC a commitment stating they would look at granting the Australian Maritime College university status. Apparently they looked at and then discarded that proposal, so we have seen yet another empty Howard government election commitment. The Maritime College has been listed in the *Good Universities Guide* as one of Australia’s leading tertiary institutions. That guide is almost considered a bible when it comes to choosing tertiary courses and institutions in Australia. The college attracts a large number of students, particularly overseas students with the decline in training in the Australian shipping industry. Many of these overseas students are required to pay full fees for their studies. However, despite the recognised high standard of education received, the status of receiving a university degree over a college qualification becomes vitally important. This is particularly so in the regions that we are targeting to attract students.

So my fear regarding the government’s decision to not grant the Maritime College university status is that the college is in danger of being subsumed by another university, thereby destroying any independence the college already has or any further independence that it may have acquired. The college was specifically set up as an independent college. There was quite a bit of toing-and-froing about where the college would go and it was eventually won for Launceston. But it was kept as a premier maritime training fa-
facility independent of another university for a reason: we wanted to safeguard the amount of funding that went to it. We wanted to safeguard the particularly intensive resourcing that happened and we wanted to make sure that we could actually market to the world not a little course off the junket of some other university but a specific maritime training facility in the country that has the fifth-largest maritime task in the world.

It is imperative for the college’s survival that it be recognised as the outstanding educational facility that it is and that its autonomy be protected. It is also imperative to the AMC that the research carried out by the college and the study being completed by its students is afforded the level of respect and recognition that is deserved. This level of excellence is further demonstrated through the recent announcement that the college is about to further diversify its training through its plans to offer a new course next year on superyacht handling. This course is presently offered only in the UK and US and will ensure that the college continues to attract students from all over the world wanting to learn these skills. The AMC is the premier research and training facility in the Australian maritime industry. It is now time for the government to come clean on why it continues to refuse to support this college. The community of Bass have a right to feel let down by this government. (Time expired)

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

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

Mr BARTLETT (Macquarie) (1.06 p.m.)—I rise to acknowledge the important role of the Australian Maritime College in the Australian education sector. I hasten to add that I do so from the perspective of a member representing a landlocked electorate. However, I am a member totally committed to our education sector and to supporting quality educational institutions, such as the AMC. The Australian Maritime College, which is located in Launceston, was established under an act of federal parliament in 1978 to provide a centralised education and training facility to support the Australian maritime industry. The government acknowledges that the AMC is a strong performer as a college, both in teaching and in research, and is highly regarded in the nation’s maritime sector and internationally. Last year the college had 1,956 students, of which 213 were overseas students, who are part of an expanding and very important export education sector of this country.

The Australian Maritime College currently receives strong government support. It received Commonwealth funding last year to the tune of $12.3 million. However, the concern of the member for Bass, as we understand it, is that it is not yet classified as a university. There are 43 self-accrediting higher education institutions in Australia. Thirty-nine of these are universities. Obviously, not all are. The AMC applied for university status in 2002 and the government, in fulfilling its election commitment, moved promptly to examine these claims and to fulfil its election commitments—contrary to what the member for Bass is suggesting—as it promised it would.

In August 2002 an expert review panel was appointed by the minister to consider the AMC’s application for university status in accordance with the national protocols for the higher education approval process. These national protocols are a key element of Australia’s quality assurance framework for higher education. They help to protect the standing of Australian universities nationally and internationally. They ensure consistent criteria and standards across Australia for assessing the recognition of new universities. My colleague the member for Cowper will
shortly expand on the importance of these national protocols. The expert review panel appointed by the government conducted a thorough assessment and found that the AMC, while doing some excellent things, does not yet meet the criteria for a university as set out in these national protocols. The Minister for Education, Science and Training, Dr Brendan Nelson, heard from both the panel and the AMC before agreeing that the AMC was not ready for university status in its own right.

I understand the disappointment of the member for Bass but I am sure she would want the nation’s quality assurance protocols upheld. It is absolutely imperative that we maintain the high standards of Australian universities. The Australian Maritime College have been provided with two other options to pursue university status; it is not the end of the road for them. They can seek formal affiliation with an existing university or they can reapply under the national protocols in 2006. The Commonwealth has indicated that it will be pleased to accept another application from the AMC. For the member for Bass to propose that the AMC be granted university status at this time, in spite of the fact that it has not been seen by an independent expert review panel to reach those national protocols, would really be to the detriment of Australia’s strong quality assurance system for higher education. I am sure that in spite of her parochial interest in this issue she would want to see those national protocols upheld, and I am sure she can see the sense in that. That is why the government opposes the O’Byrne motion on the books at this time.

The government’s election commitments stated that, in order to assist the AMC to maintain and improve its position, the coalition would consult with the AMC and the relevant authorities and would seek to make those necessary amendments to include the title ‘university’ in its name. The government has sought to fulfil its election commitment as far as possible but, until those protocols are met, it would be negligent of the government to allow that to proceed any further. While following that expert review panel the AMC has been seen to not yet fulfil the requirements of university status, the government is still concerned and committed to doing what it can to support the AMC. The AMC does an excellent job in Australia’s education centre. The Commonwealth government supports the AMC in its efforts to enhance its international reputation and will continue to provide support for the AMC where possible, but where consistent with national protocols.

Mr ADAMS (Lyons) (1.11 p.m.)—As my colleague the member for Bass has plainly explained, the Australian Maritime College has an excellent reputation for education and training. It covers a very broad area of training as well as specialising in some key research projects and it really deserves to continue its role as a maritime college. It does not comfortably fit into the University of Tasmania’s mould or the mould of any other university that I know of. It really has its own specialisation and has been seen as very important in the training of mariners from all around the world. It pulls students from all over the South Pacific, New Zealand and other parts of the world and from the rest of Australia, and is hoping to expand this even further.

The honourable member for Macquarie spoke of some expert review committee that was set up to try to get the Prime Minister out of the words he used, which were to promise this college the status of university at the last election. Of course, it was an election promise to Tasmania and to this college which has now been broken by this government. It is really about the marketplace. This college needs to be able to draw students
from all over the world to its courses, which are, of course, excellent. With the status of university it would be even more useful for marketing opportunities for this area and also for the smallest economy in the states of the Federation of Australia—that is, Tasmania. So it is not something flippant to be pushed off, like the member for Macquarie has done. It is a broken promise of this government to the state of Tasmania.

With full university status, we could lead the world with specific training for coast-guard duties, which are so important if we are to maintain a safe and secure Australia. It would also mean that courses could be further developed for groups such as the water police, fisheries inspectors and search and rescue, all of which are part of the needs of Tasmania and the rest of Australia, and I am sure every state would benefit.

I note in fact that at the weekend our state minister for police, David Llewellyn, announced some changes to Tasmania’s emergency services after a review. A maritime services and search and rescue section will be responsible for search and rescue, maritime assets management and volunteer liaison with groups such as the Royal Volunteer Coastal Patrol, which does such a terrific job in Tasmania, and the Australian Volunteer Coast Guard. These require specialist training, and to ensure this move is successful the Australian Maritime College is well placed to help with the professional training of these groups. Their roles have gone beyond the training they can get through the state system, and it is important to have a system of training linking into university schemes and accreditation. It could also include courses that are linked with the Navy side of the Australian Defence Force Academy. Sea rescue is very much in the news these days. It is obvious that, although we have some very highly trained people now, the courses could be made more available in general rather than just for specialised parts of the forces.

The Australian Maritime College has been a very strong asset to Tasmania, and its graduates can be found all over the world. It makes sense to continue its good name by granting it university status. With that status it will attract more students and encourage more countries to participate in courses that will help protect their borders as well.

This government at the last election promised the AMC university status, which it has in pretty well everything but name. The government should honour that promise. It is a broken promise by this Prime Minister and this government to the state of Tasmania and to the people of Tasmania. It would be good for Tasmania, good for Australia and also good for all our allies and friends.

Mr HARTSUYKER (Cowper) (1.16 p.m.)—Awarding an institution university status is an extremely important achievement for any educational college. However, I am sure both sides of this House would agree that before such a status is approved for any campus it is incumbent on the government to ensure that the institution can meet the criteria for accreditation. That is fundamentally essential to retaining the integrity and the high professional and academic standards which have become synonymous with tertiary education in Australia. With that in mind, I think it is essential that the House is aware of the circumstances which relate to the Australian Maritime College being awarded university status. It is essential that all the facts are presented in order to clarify to the House, firstly, the requirements for an Australian university and, secondly, how the Australian Maritime College might achieve university status.

Australia has national protocols for higher education approval processes that were approved by the Ministerial Council on Educa-
tion, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs in 2000, to which the Australian government and all the Australian state and territory governments are signatories. The national protocols are a key element of Australia’s quality assurance framework for higher education and help to protect the standing of Australian universities both nationally and internationally. They ensure consistent criteria and standards across Australia in the criteria and processes for assessing recognition of new universities.

The member for Macquarie has detailed a number of issues, and I would like to particularly expand on the issue of national protocols. National protocol 1 sets out the criteria to achieve university status in Australia. There are six criteria, which include an appropriate breadth and depth of academic offerings; teaching and learning that engages with advanced knowledge; advanced scholarship and the creation of new knowledge through research and original creative endeavour; and resources sufficient to sustain the institution as a university. The member for Bass may be aware that only last year the national protocols were supported in this House by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition. They are a key element in protecting the standards of our higher education industry.

The Australian Maritime College was found by an expert panel to meet most of the nationally agreed criteria for a university set out in the national protocols only to a limited degree. The college’s stakeholders and the panel that reviewed it for university status commend the quality of its graduates, industry input into its courses and its research facilities. The review panel also commended the AMC for its collaborative activities, including its work with the University of Tasmania and the Defence Science and Technology Organisation. These strengths provide a positive base from which to build capacity for university status accreditation. However, the panel recommended several areas in which the AMC needs to build its capabilities in order to meet the national protocols criteria for a university. These include the areas of governance, quality assurance, teaching, and learning policies and practices. I am sure the member for Bass would appreciate how important it is to get these measures right. The government does not disagree that the AMC is a strong performer as a college and highly regarded in the nation’s maritime sector, but this does not automatically entitle it to the status of a university.

In my own electorate of Cowper, we have seen the significant expansion of the Southern Cross University. The Southern Cross University campus in Coffs Harbour continues to go from strength to strength. The reason for this ongoing development has been in part its commitment to quality assurance and governance. That approach has complemented its positive focus on developing courses which are in demand. For example, the Coffs Harbour campus of the university has now secured 20 nursing places, which will enable more young people to be trained in an area where there is a genuine shortage of labour.

It is imperative that a comprehensive process is in place to ensure the highest standards are maintained in order to attain university status. We owe it to the students—past, current and future—that high academic standards are demanded to ensure that they get a competitive edge. The AMC has accepted that a number of issues need to be addressed before university status can be attained. It has indicated that it is undergoing a range of improvements and will be working hard towards the goal of achieving university status over the long term. The college has been provided with two options: firstly, amalgamation or affiliation with another university or, secondly, to apply again for university status in 2006. (Time expired)
Mr PEARCE (Aston) (1.22 p.m.)—by leave—I move:

That this House:

(1) commends the Australian Government on its efforts to support the local film industry;
(2) recognises the cultural and economic contribution that the Australian film industry makes to the nation; and
(3) acknowledges the excellence of the film industry training centres in Australia.

It is my pleasure to speak to this very important motion, which has been introduced by my colleague the honourable member for Cook. Film is an important part of modern Australian culture. Australian film and our local industry make significant contributions to our nation, both culturally and of course economically. Culturally, the arts provide a very valuable opportunity for us to define our identity and, of course, to promote our national identity overseas. The arts are also a constant source of fulfilment and enjoyment for millions of Australians, whether young or old. Economically they are part of an Australian cultural sector that has become one of our most vibrant and successful sectors, employing hundreds of thousands of Australians and involving many thousands of great volunteers throughout Australia.

Recognising the positive contribution that film makes to the nation, the federal government is committed to investing in the Australian film industry and to initiating the ongoing reform needed to ensure that the maximum benefit is gained from that investment. When we talk about maximum benefit, we are talking about the benefit not only to Australians generally but also to the people who are involved in the sector, both from a commercial perspective as well as a career perspective.

In my remarks I want to particularly focus on the key areas of education and training in the Australian film industry and how the federal government is supporting these important opportunities, and perhaps touch on a few areas in the way forward for the future of this important industry. In particular I want to look at two of the key institutions in Australia that the federal government is supporting to help develop our local pool of film talent: the National Institute of Dramatic Art, and the Australian Film, Television and Radio School.

The National Institute of Dramatic Art or, as we know it, NIDA, is one of Australia’s finest cultural institutions. It has an international reputation for teaching some of our most celebrated actors, directors and other film and theatre professionals, including some very famous people such as Mel Gibson, Baz Luhrmann, Cate Blanchett and Miranda Otto. NIDA provides professional training at a tertiary level for young people who particularly wish to work in the entertainment industry. It provides the training for people who want to be actors; stage managers; lighting and sound designers; set and costume designers; scenery, costume or property makers; directors; voice and movement teachers; and, importantly, writers. At NIDA you can study for the award of degree, graduate diploma or advanced diploma, and you can study in eight different specialised areas. These areas are designed to satisfy the market demand in the areas of acting, design, technical production, production crafts—whether they be costume or props—scenery construction, directing, movement studies and, of course, voice studies.

There are approximately 150 full-time students at NIDA each year. In addition to
the full-time courses, the NIDA Open Program provides community access to the expertise and facilities of NIDA through short courses. These short courses are also a very important part of the service offered. These courses allow those interested in developing skills in the performing arts the chance to work with leading theatre practitioners and industry professionals. Skills taught in the Open Program range from acting and presentation skills through to production and technical skills. These short courses are conducted in Sydney, in country areas and in all capital cities. Each year approximately 5,000 people participate in Open Program classes and workshops.

This year’s budget increases the funding for NIDA by $4.6 million over the next four years. This increase builds on the significant investment in NIDA’s future made by the government through a major Federation Fund grant of $25 million for the construction of new facilities. The facilities provide opportunities for all students of acting, technical production, design and directing to train and to work at a level and scale appropriate to the performing arts industry. The additional funding will provide support for not only the building itself but also the associated program enhancements made possible by the new facilities. This funding ensures the ongoing financial sustainability of NIDA as a national centre of excellence that provides elite training for young people to work in theatre, film or television.

I want to move on and talk about the Australian Film, Television and Radio School, which is the national advanced level training institution for the film and broadcast industries in our country. The Australian Film, Television and Radio School provides advanced education and training in program making for the Australian broadcast media industries that enhance the Australian cultural identity. It is the only fully postgraduate specialist academy in the field in Australia and provides postgraduate and advanced skills training. I guess it value-adds at all levels of industry, with new training, retraining and staff interface with industry, and it provides opportunities for students to acquire and demonstrate skills of an internationally recognised standard. In fact, it acts in partnership with other levels of government, industry and community organisations to enhance skills and promote the expression of a national identity in broadcasting.

The school offers full-time programs at certificate, graduate diploma, Master of Arts and Master of Arts (Honours) levels. The full-time postgraduate program offers specialisation in cinematography, design, documentary, sound, scriptwriting, editing, directing, producing, digital media, television and indeed screen studies. The school accepts around 100 students each year in its full-time courses. In addition to this, a range of over 100 short courses and seminars are also offered nationwide throughout the year, taking around 5,000 students. These are aimed at those who wish to broaden their skills without undertaking full-time study. The federal government will provide almost $16 million to the school this financial year. So, whilst we can be rightly proud of these wonderful national institutions of culture, as always the government is looking at ways to improve the opportunities. I would like to congratulate my colleague the honourable member for Cook on introducing this motion and I support it wholeheartedly.

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

Mr BRENDAN O’CONNOR (Burke) (1.31 p.m.)—It has become a cliche to hear the 1970s in Australia described as a cultural renaissance, especially if the speaker is a baby boomer who came of age during that time and thinks that everything good about
Australia started to happen around the year that he or she turned 18. But in a very real sense during that decade Australia literally woke up to itself. By that I mean that we started to see Australian images and hear Australian voices for the first time. Genuine Australian accents could be heard on the theatre stage and even on the ABC, television and family snapshots came in colour and we finally had a genuinely progressive and reformist government in Canberra.

In our recollection of that time, together with the images of war and social and political upheaval, we must include Bazza McKenzie, Jack Thompson, Judy Davis and the film Picnic at Hanging Rock. For the first time in our country’s history, our films became an indispensable part of our culture—so much so that it is now impossible to imagine Australia’s image in the world without taking proper account of our extraordinary film industry and the talent it produces. We are a small country, and yet there are so many of us working in the world’s film industries that they even have a name for us in Hollywood: the Kangaroo Mafia.

It is only proper then that this House recognise the extraordinary cultural, intellectual and economic contribution made by Australian workers in the film industry. This continuing contribution would have been impossible without the establishment of the Film and Television School by the Whitlam government in 1975. Preceding this, Swinburne Institute of Technology had a course in film and television running as early as 1966. Today, this course is part of the Victorian College of the Arts. The VCA and the Australian Film, Television and Radio School together ensure that we produce directors, editors, cinematographers and technicians who are among the very best in the world. Imagine Australian culture of the last 30 years without films like My Brilliant Career, Romper Stomper, Love and Other Catastrophes, Head On, Death in Brunswick, Chopper and Oscar and Lucinda. These and many others were made by graduates of the Swinburne or VCA film course. Imagine a film culture without Rabbit Proof Fence, Beneath Clouds, Looking for Alibrandi, The Quiet American, One Night the Moon, An Angel at My Table, Australian Rules, The Piano, or The Tracker. These films were all made by graduates of the Australian Film, Television and Radio School.

Obviously, in a country with the population of Australia there will always be a nexus between levels of government support and a healthy and fertile industry. I think the fact is that there are benefits that are tangible, but this government’s record of support for the industry has been somewhat patchy. After listening to five years of complaints that the film industry was in danger of dying from neglect, this government finally implemented a package of increased funding and a tax rebate scheme in September 2001, whose results, I concede, have been positive. But once again the industry has cause for concern that this government may put the health and vibrancy of our nation’s cultural sector in second best place, behind its economic and ideological imperatives.

Recently, this parliament was paid a visit by prominent figures in film and television, including actor Bryan Brown and actor/director Rachel Ward, who came beseeching the Howard government not to sell out our industry in the free trade agreement negotiations with the United States. The government’s response to these and many other concerns about the current round of talks has been at best ambiguous. As recently as last week, we heard reports that the US was applying pressure on the government to compromise our ability to frame provisions that would protect Australian content, now and into the future. If Australia’s local content rules are relaxed or removed in the FTA
negotiations, the cheaper American product will have an enormous competitive advantage, compromising or destroying the quality, depth and extraordinary vitality of our cultural voice. As Bryan Brown said: ‘This is a cultural thing. This is about who we are, what we are. This isn’t just something that you buy and sell and then it doesn’t exist any more. This goes on and on and on.’

I am happy to commend the motion. I cannot accept that there has been full support by this government, but I hope the government hears this motion today and accepts that any negotiations involving the content of our film industry in relation to the free trade agreement negotiations are properly considered. (Time expired.)

Mr Baird (Cook) (1.36 p.m.)—The Australian film industry is one of this country’s great cultural icons. From its inception, the prime subject matter has centred on local stories and myths. From the 1906 production of The Story of the Kelly Gang, widely regarded as the world’s first full-length feature, to the more recent thought provoking film Gallipoli and on to the depiction of Australia as a modern, diverse and tolerant society in The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert, the Australian movie industry and the general movie experience engendered from these productions have been things of which all Australians can be proud. In the 1990s, 295 features were produced. This has created solid foundations for an export commodity in an industry which can only increase in the future.

Australia’s first theatrical entrepreneur, James McMahon, opened a kinetoscope in 1894 in Pitt Street and charged patrons one shilling to view the films via eyepieces. In 1896 a magician named Carl Hertz is believed to have been the first person to show a film for the paying public in Australia. Following the end of World War II the film industry sank to what was considered to be new lows as the country faced depression and domination by offshore films and co-productions.

However, in the late 1970s and early eighties this was to turn completely, thanks in large part to such feature productions as Picnic at Hanging Rock, Mad Max and Crocodile Dundee. It was the start of a new generation of film-makers and film stars. The Australian Film, Television and Radio School and the Australian Film Development Corporation were formed, and the industry began to expand. We were and still are being recognised for the vision that we project to the rest of the world in terms of product, content and participants. We have Baz Luhrmann putting a contemporary edge on a Shakespearean classic, Australians winning the major motion picture prizes for fields as diverse as acting, cinematography and screenplays, and Australia being chosen as a country of choice in which to shoot films such as The Matrix.

Our dynamic society becomes more competitive by the day. Competition drives us to succeed, and by looking at the facts you can see that the local film industry is growing and strengthening. As essayist Tom O’Regan pointed out:

An increasingly free wheeling internationalism characterized the Australian filmmaking milieu as actors, directors, cinematographers, producers, art directors responded to domestic circumstance and the opportunities created by more international production.

The Australian film industry is involved in all areas of the film-making process. All the advancements have seen Australia become a significant offshore production site. Overseas investors and film-makers are drawn to Australia with a favourable exchange rate and competitive production costs. It is claimed that crewing costs in Australia are as much
as 25 per cent to 30 per cent lower than in Los Angeles.

They are also drawn by a state-of-the-art film studio on the Gold Coast and the adaptability and diversity of Australian locations to double as American, European or just ‘geographically unspecific’ locations. So much are we seen as a choice destination by the United States that Warner Bros studios in Queensland advertises itself as ‘Hollywood on the Gold Coast’. Even in my own electorate, Serenity Cove is being developed for film production. We are hoping that 300 regular jobs will be created, swelling to more than 1,000 when a movie is being shot.

According to the recent report Final Destination—Comparison of film tax incentives Australia and Canada, Australia is being made highly competitive as a location for large film productions thanks to the Australian government’s refundable tax offset. Canada is one of this country’s major competitors when seeking to attract overseas investments in film. This report highlights that it could cost up to 7.5 per cent less to make a feature film in Australia than in Canada. This cost advantage is based on a $US24 million runaway production being shot in Sydney or Vancouver—with a runaway production being classified as a film usually financed by a major US studio.

We find that the Australian government, through the Film Finance Corporation, has allocated $60.5 million this year. The funding arrangements in place are essential and provide long-term certainty for investors in Australia. This commitment is also essential as it is the Australian telemovies, mini-series and dramas that we want to see and that will come to characterise who we are as people and as a nation over time. The importance of FFC is critical.

Finally, the Australian Film, Television and Radio School is essential for creating and supporting an environment where education and training is being provided for Australia’s best and brightest aspiring filmmakers. Encompassing the behind-the-scenes areas of direction, production, cinematography and lighting, the AFTRS is ensuring that our next Baz Luhrmann and Dean Semler have every available opportunity. This government is supporting strongly the arts community. This government is supporting the film industry. We have an international reputation of great renown. (Time expired)

Mr SAWFORD (Port Adelaide) (1.41 p.m.)—This motion on the film industry is timely, but not necessarily for the reason the member for Cook suggests. It is just one week after the announcement that the ABC has dropped the children’s current affairs program Behind the News and cut the legs off Foreign Correspondent, World at Noon, ABC Kids, Fly TV et cetera. I am sure certain members opposite are acutely embarrassed.

As supporters of the South Australia Film Corporation living in my electorate have suggested to me, ‘support’, in the member for Cook’s motion, is a strange word to use when this government has not removed the local film industry from the free trade agreement negotiations with the United States. Australians have the right to tell their own stories in their own words. We are not and never should be an outpost of the United States. The people of the United States understand that—even if people like Senator Alston, the Prime Minister, John Howard, and trade minister, Mark Vaile, do not. I want Australian children to use the words ‘shop’, ‘footpath’ and so on as they are encouraged to do by programs like Behind the News. I do not want them using words like ‘store’ and ‘sidewalk’. And let us not forget that the top-rating television programs for Australian viewers are local programs, whether they are drama or documentary.

CHAMBER
The local film industry has experienced a serious downturn in activity for the first six months of this year. There were several reasons for this, apart from the global issues like the rising Australian dollar, the war in Iraq, SARS and the fear of terrorism. Production levels fell due to the Film Finance Corporation not being able to meet the demand on funds from local producers. Mr Speaker, I am pleased to report, though, that South Australia supported the Australian independent film industry and, as a result, scooped the pool at the Australian Film Institute awards—something both you and I are proud of—and many of the films produced in South Australia went on to achieve international box office and critical acclaim.

Last year, as the member for Cook indicated, the government introduced a 12.5 per cent tax offset for big-budget overseas feature films shooting in Australia. The government of New Zealand copied that initiative, but they used their brains: they extended it to include television services. Why is the Australian government not so smart? It is estimated that so far this year the Australian industry has lost millions and millions of dollars worth of television series work because we do not offer the same foresight as the New Zealanders. We should know television series provide the bread-and-butter work that keeps Australian film crews working, Australian studios open and studios built by private enterprise. According to the ABS, every dollar spent in film production generates $3 in the community. There is an all-important job dividend: 20 to 30 jobs are created with each $1 million spent in the community.

But it is reported that post-production facilities in the eastern states are laying off staff and, in some cases, closing their doors permanently. Film and television play a crucial part in our everyday cultural life. They reflect the core characteristics and values of our Australian society and the far-reaching strategy to give it the strength, respectability and recognition it deserves. That is the trinity of what is missing in the member’s motion. Upcoming generations will expect a visual medium to provide entertainment, information and education as a matter of course, delivered through a variety of platforms. Where is the government’s long-term plan to support and grow this industry? It is sadly missing in the member for Cook’s motion.

The SPEAKER—Order! It being 1.45 p.m., the debate is interrupted in accordance with standing order 106A. The debate is adjourned and the resumption of the debate will be made an order of the day for the next sitting. The member for Port Adelaide will have leave to continue speaking when the debate is resumed.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Textile and Clothing Industry

Ms O’BYRNE (Bass) (1.45 p.m.)—I hold grave concerns about the recommendations of the recent Productivity Commission report, and the hearings into tariffs on the textile and clothing industry, that proposed lifting the current tariff freeze and introducing cuts will ultimately result in large job cuts for the industry. Already around 100,000 textile workers across the country have lost their jobs. The textile industry has been under intense pressure from foreign competition for a long time now and, by accepting these latest recommendations, many workers will be faced with the prospect of further job losses. Reducing government assistance to the industry will increase the vulnerability of workers and have a disastrous social impact, particularly in regional areas such as Tasmania.

Under the current tariffs, the industry is internationally competitive with comparatively low tariffs. There should be no consideration of lifting these tariffs without agree-
ment from our trading partners, like China and India, to also lift their tariffs. For the Australian textile industry to survive there must be a level playing field. Australia and the many regional communities where textile companies are based simply cannot afford to continue losing jobs to offshore operations. Tomorrow there will be representatives from the clothing and textile industry from each state and territory outside Parliament House. I urge all members to show support for the textile industry and the textile workers in their electorates.

Gallagher, Mr Peter ‘Pedro’

Mrs MA Y (McPherson) (1.46 p.m.)—Last Friday week the Gold Coast community came together as one to pay tribute to our own Gold Coast sporting legend and former rugby league hard man Peter Gallagher or, as he is affectionately known on the coast, ‘Pedro’. It was a tribute that will be remembered for a long time. Over 700 people turned up to honour this great man and support him in what will be the greatest challenge of his life. Pedro is battling life-threatening cancer and he needs a supporting hand to undergo treatment for the cancer at a specialist clinic in Germany. His mates did not let him down—the greats of rugby league were in attendance along with other sportsmen, business and community leaders, politicians and friends. They came to pay tribute to a wonderful man. They spoke of his achievements, his successes and his actions. They spoke of his integrity, of a man who during his life has embraced the qualities of courage, loyalty, humility, compassion and citizenship.

I only met Peter for the first time five years ago. He was chairman of the Gold Coast Turf Club and, over the years, this gentle giant and former Australian rugby league captain always extended to me a friendly welcome to the turf club. I remember the year the Prime Minister came to watch the Prime Minister’s Cup, an annual event that Peter was particularly proud of. Peter welcomed the Prime Minister in the same way he welcomed all his guests: with friendship and warmth, with dignity and courtesy. Peter Gallagher, I wish you well with your next challenge. You will be in my prayers and thoughts and, I have no doubt, in the prayers and thoughts of all Gold Coasters. Gods speed and come home safely.

Cunningham Electorate: Lawrence Hargrave Drive

Mr ORGAN (Cunningham) (1.47 p.m.)—Last Thursday night I chaired a public meeting, attended by over 200 constituents, in my electorate of Cunningham. It concerned the severe social and economic impact the closure of Lawrence Hargrave Drive is having on the community. This road is one of Australia’s premier scenic drives and is described as arguably the most beautiful stretch of coastline between Melbourne and Cape York. It is a major tourist attraction and is an arterial road servicing the Illawarra. The road has been closed by the New South Wales Roads and Traffic Authority for lengthy periods over the past year, including throughout the recent school holiday tourist season, apparently due to concern by the RTA with regard to the threat of rock falls and possible litigation.

The now indefinite closure is having major social and economic impacts within my electorate and beyond. For example, an elderly lady is no longer receiving her Meals on Wheels service, a seven-year-old girl’s four-minute trip to school now takes 1½ hours, and the MS Society’s annual ‘Sydney to the Gong’ fundraising bike ride is under threat. The closure has cut off emergency services and regular bus services, including school bus services. The impact on local businesses and tourism has been so severe that a number
of businesses are facing imminent closure. People are considering selling their homes because of its impact on their work and family life. This is an issue that the state Labor government seems reluctant to pursue. I will therefore be asking the Minister for Transport and Regional Services to consider designating Lawrence Hargrave Drive a road of national importance in view of its role as a major piece of tourism infrastructure that provides jobs and delivers thousands of visitors from Sydney and overseas to the Illawarra region.

**Sport: Polar Bears Swimming Club**

Mr Baird (Cook) (1.49 p.m.)—Sporting clubs across Australia like to pride themselves on their rich history and the mateship that embodies their club and its traditions. The Polar Bears swimming club is no different. On Saturday night I attended a celebration of its 50th anniversary, where we relived the stories and memories of the past 50 years.

The Polar Bears have over 150 members, stretching across the generations, and they meet religiously at Cronulla surf club every Sunday morning throughout the winter months and swim at the rock pool at Cronulla no matter what the weather and no matter what the conditions. Over the past 50 years, the Polar Bears swimming club has proven that it is a champion club by winning 11 national titles and a host of minor titles, including recently the regional championship against the Bondi Icebergs. It is home to swimming champions past and present and to many who are just champions of life.

This club is about a love of swimming, a love of life and a challenge. The feats of many of these men can be summed up by Jack Brownjohn, who in his 70s swims 50 metres in 31.5 seconds. Australians are passionate about their sport and the club is usually an extension of the family. ‘Spirit’ and ‘mateship’ are words commonly used in the sporting vernacular to describe ‘the club’, but there is no greater expression than those words when talking about the Polar Bears. To the Polar Bears, their president, Russell Stewart, and captain, Brad Turner: I congratulate you on the rich history of your club and hope that the next 50 years bring as much success as the first.

**Arts: Film Industry**

Mr Sawford (Port Adelaide) (1.50 p.m.)—In my previous speech I acknowledged the good work of the government with regard to big budget feature films from overseas being made in Australia with Australian film crews and at Australian film studios. The dumb part of it was that it was not extended to television, as our compatriots in New Zealand have done. But there is another dumb thing: in the film industry, which is a crucial part of the national psyche in this country, government-supported training centres are national institutions but often they do not represent the whole country. Boards are stacked—and the member for Cook knows this—with appointees from the eastern states. There is no regional policy whatsoever to address opportunities for growth in the smaller states or to acknowledge the importance of voices from the fringe of the national cultural mix, even though these regional taxpayers contribute to federal consolidated revenue.

The Australian film industry has made a great contribution to this nation but there is a long way to go and it needs a far more supportive government. The real question to ask is whether this government has the wit, the strategy and the determination to achieve outcomes of which all Australians can be proud. You can only do that if all Australians are represented in national training and on government boards in film and television.
That certainly should commence, and I encourage the government to commence it.

**The SPEAKER**—Order! I did not interrupt the member for Port Adelaide, but I would draw his attention to standing order 71. If he has any concerns about it, he may like to discuss them with me. I just ask him to have a look at standing order 71.

**Health: Commonwealth-State Health Care Agreements**

**Ms GAMBARO** (Petrie) (1.52 p.m.)—In today’s *Courier-Mail*, Queensland Premier Peter Beattie accuses the federal government of blackmail over the signing of the new health agreement. The only blackmailing is Mr Beattie’s cold-hearted refusal to sign by 31 August, which he admits is costing Queensland $9 million, or $146,000 per day, by his own reckoning.

In my own electorate there is a woman who has waited 2½ years in severe pain for a hernia operation. On the day of her operation she waited another 6½ hours before being turned away, along with seven others on the waiting list, because no post-operative care beds could be found. She has had 2½ years of waiting and 6½ hours of daily pain, and all Mr Beattie can say is: ‘I won’t sign. Go away.’ He relies on fear as much as pain. On the way out of the hospital my constituent was warned not to talk about what happened ‘because it could cause a huge riot’. As a tactic that is brilliant: wear them down until they go away quietly to die. It may be the only thing about Queensland’s hospital system which is working. So come on, Mr Beattie, sign the health care agreement and give Queenslanders the extra $841 million they deserve. Stop inflicting unnecessary pain and suffering on thousands of constituents in Queensland. They deserve better than this.

**Aviation: Second Sydney Airport**

**Mr MURPHY** (Lowe) (1.53 p.m.)—Picking up from the member for Petrie, I would like to say to the government that the Prime Minister has to stop inflicting aircraft noise on the people I represent and on the people of Sydney. I want to condemn the Prime Minister for, yesterday on national television, making it quite plain that he does not believe Sydney will ever need a second airport. Mr Speaker, you know that in the five years I have been here I have spoken very passionately about the impact of aircraft noise on the constituents I represent. Now the government has abandoned a second airport for the people of Sydney.

I have today tabled a notice of motion which will appear on tomorrow’s *Notice Paper* and which says that we have to take the politics out of this issue and set up a joint select committee of both houses of parliament to identify an alternative site for a second airport. The government has sold out the people of Sydney to Macquarie Bank and its partners. As an airport—and I have said this many times—it operates very well as a shopping centre. Under Max Moore-Wilton and his master plan, which I am holding up here today, it is plain that over the next 20 years we are going to get 31.5 per cent movements to the north. We were promised by the Prime Minister when he was elected in 1996 that we would only get 17 per cent movements to the north. There was a commitment for fair noise sharing. There is an unbearable level of noise in Sydney. We need a second airport. It is environmentally irresponsible to have a second airport inside the Sydney basin. That is why I support a second airport outside the Sydney basin. *(Time expired)*

**Multicultural Affairs**

**Mr CIOBO** (Moncrieff) (1.55 p.m.)—It used to be said that Australia rode on the sheep’s back. Now, however, it would be
more accurate to say that this great nation of ours is carried on the shoulders of its people. For this culturally diverse country, that includes the many who, born in another country, have come to Australia to start a new life, to sow new opportunities and to provide their children with a future blessed with this nation’s richness. Each of these people has enriched our nation with their respective talents and has been welcomed into the Australian family. On the Gold Coast we have welcomed around 24 per cent of our population to our Australian family. One of the key Gold Coast community groups that rolls out the welcome mat in a very practical way is the Multicultural Families Organisation. The MFO recently celebrated with their gala night, which I was delighted to attend with my wife Astra, on Saturday, 26 July. Similarly, it was my pleasure to attend the ninth annual celebration of the nation’s mass. I particularly thank my friend James Tan from the deanery multicultural group, and I congratulate him on bringing so many people from different countries and different cultures together as one. It was standing room only. Congratulations to both the Multicultural Families Organisation and the deanery multicultural group on their fine efforts. It is always a pleasure to be associated with them.

Menadue, Mr David

Mr DANBY (Melbourne Ports) (1.56 p.m.)—Last week, with the Deputy Premier of Victoria, I attended the launch of David Menadue’s book Positive. David Menadue was one of the first men in Australia to be diagnosed as HIV positive. In 1984 when he was diagnosed, David did not think he would live to the age of 40. All of us who celebrated with him on the night of the book launch were very pleased that he has turned 50. He is one of the great examples for the wider Australian community of surviving the terrible plague of HIV. His survival and his struggle through the AIDS era has been a positive example to the gay community. I want to read two particular statements by Justice Kirby and Professor Denis Altman that I think summarise this book, the contribution of David Menadue and the problems with the disease. Justice Kirby says:

This book tells how it looks inside the vortex of HIV/AIDS. The author chronicles the epidemic as one who sees it as it is but has always felt loved. Love shines through his words, about a global problem much bigger than terrorism.

Professor Denis Altman says:

In Positive, David Menadue tells the story of his life as a positive gay man in language which is more moving for its clarity and accessibility. Everyone who remembers being knocked over by the school bully will recognise the echoes of their own experience in David’s story. This is an important addition to Australia’s history, the impact of AIDS on this country, the epidemic and on Australia’s social and sexual mores.

I congratulate Mr Menadue and the Deputy Premier on the launch of this book and on exposing their thinking. (Time expired)

Dunkley Electorate: Awards

Mr BILLSON (Dunkley) (1.58 p.m.)—Two very distinct but related areas of service to nation building were honoured in a recent appreciation ceremony in Dunkley. The thanks of a grateful nation were conveyed to local Defence Force veterans and several young people who had volunteered to work overseas in support of Australia’s aid and development program. The ceremony was a moving occasion involving people of different generations, each of which contributed nation-building service, in their time, in keeping with their opportunity to make that contribution.

To our veterans we conveyed our sincere gratitude for their service and sacrifice, which helped to deliver the peace, prosperity and pluralism we enjoy as Australians. Certificates of appreciation were presented to World War II veterans and Mount Eliza resi-
students John Cook and Philip Henry; Frankston World War II veteran and RSL identity Clarrie Wolfenden; peace operations veteran David Terry from Langwarrin; Julie Gerrard, on behalf of her father, World War II veteran Roy Carter; and our volunteers—the young people applying their skills and experience and making a commitment to help other countries less fortunate than ours. They grasped the great legacy gifted to our generation by our veterans, and they have applied this hard-earned good fortune to the benefit of our regional neighbours.

Frankston resident Fiona Stevens was recognised for 3½ months of development work in English language tutoring in an isolated community in Nepal. Langwarrin resident and intensive care nurse Robyn Graham spent two months as part of the Fiji open-heart operation team based in Nadi. Another Langwarrin resident, Gemma Hardie, joined a rural development youth team to undertake a community census and needs assessment for a small northern Philippines village. These people are contributing a vital part to Australia’s overseas aid program, which will see our country provide $1.894 billion in official development assistance in 2003-04. This is whole-of-nation commitment, and these selfless individuals volunteer to make their personal contribution. We congratulate them. (Time expired)

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

MINISTERIAL ARRANGEMENTS

Mr Howard (Bennelong—Prime Minister) (2.00 p.m.)—I inform the House that the Minister for Industry, Tourism and Resources will be absent from question time today and until 22 August. The minister remains on leave. The Minister for Small Business and Tourism will continue to answer questions on his behalf.

CONDOLENCES

Jones, Hon. Charles Keith, AO

Mr Howard (Bennelong—Prime Minister) (2.01 p.m.)—I move:

That the House expresses its deep regret at the death on 7 August 2003, of the Honourable Charles Keith Jones, AO, former Federal Minister and Member of this House for the Division of Newcastle from 1958 to 1983, places on record its appreciation of his long and meritorious service, and tenders its profound sympathy to his family in their bereavement.

Charles Keith Jones was born on 12 September 1917 at Newcastle, New South Wales. He was educated at Cooks Hill High School and Newcastle Technical College. He married Doreen Wright in 1939. After serving his boilermaker’s apprenticeship at the BHP steelworks, Charles Jones worked at Stewarts and Lloyds, then at the State Dockyard. Charles, or Charlie, as most people knew him, was a member of the boilermakers union and was involved with the Metal Trades Federation of Unions and the Trades Hall Council.

Mr Jones was elected to the Newcastle City Council in 1946. At the age of only 39 he became Lord Mayor of Newcastle, a position he held between 1956 and 1957. He was an inaugural councillor of the Shortland County Council from 1957 until his election to federal parliament in the election of 1958. In 1958 he was elected to the House of Representatives seat of Newcastle, holding the seat until his retirement just before the general election of 1983. He was Minister for Transport from 1972 to 1975 and Minister for Civil Aviation from 1972 to 1973. He held several party positions whilst in opposition. As minister, he is said to have merged shipping, aviation and land transport into a single department.
He served on several parliamentary committees including printing, road safety, aircraft noise and tourism. He was the Deputy Chairman of Committees from 1964 to 1967 and from 1980 to 1983. He also attended several overseas parliamentary delegations and conferences, and he frequently travelled overseas on official duties. He was awarded an Officer in the Order of Australia for service to politics and government in the 1984 Australia Day honours list. He was presented with the Queen Elizabeth II Silver Jubilee Medal in 1977. More recently, he was presented with the Centenary Medal for service to the Australian community.

For those of us in this place who were there and who served with him—and I was privileged to have been one of those—Charlie Jones epitomised the person who might be described as having had an impeccable traditional Labor Party background. He was a very strong trade unionist and a committed supporter of the interests of working people. He rose through the ranks, so to speak, of the trade union movement. To serve on Newcastle City Council and become Lord Mayor of Newcastle is, indeed, by that very description, to claim fairly impeccable Labor Party credentials. They do not get much better. Occasionally, those who do not belong to that faith have crept into that position, but by and large it is the preserve of people with impeccable Labor backgrounds.

Charlie Jones had a great sense of humour. I think we had one thing in common, despite our political differences: we shared a common love of Hawks Nest beach. I think Charlie used to fish there and I holidayed there with my family for a period of some 20 years. Let me say, on behalf of the government, to someone who was an old warrior for the Labor Party, that we appreciate and respect the contribution he made to public life in Australia, to his own party, to the trade union movement, to the Hunter Valley and particularly to the City of Newcastle. I particularly extend to his wife, Doreen, his children and other family members and friends our very sincere sympathy on their sad loss.

Mr CREAN (Hotham—Leader of the Opposition) (2.05 p.m.)—I thank the Prime Minister for his words of condolence. I join with him in support of this motion in recognition of the contribution of Charlie Jones. The Labor Movement farewells one of its cherished veterans with the passing of Charlie. He was a great reforming member of the Whitlam government. He passed away at North Lambton in Newcastle on 7 August. He was 85 years of age.

Charlie joined the Labor Party in 1941. He held the seat of Newcastle for 25 years, winning it at 10 consecutive elections from 1958 to 1993. He was a contemporary of my father in this parliament and I remember on many occasions here the great times and fun that was had when Charlie was around. He was a great individual to be with and he had a great sense of humour. He was not only a successful minister; he was a champion for his electorate. He served it as alderman and as mayor. Of course, Newcastle, as we all know, was in his day a huge steel making and shipbuilding town. It helped us understand Charlie’s belief in the need for an Australian shipping industry, to which he was totally committed, to provide jobs and security for the people in his electorate.

He was one of those people who pushed for an airport at Newcastle, and was eventually successful. He was very much a member of the labour movement of the old school. He was apprenticed to the BHP steelworks as a boilermaker, and he remained there until being elected Lord Mayor of Newcastle in 1956 at the age of 39, as the Prime Minister indicated. He was very active in his union—the boilermakers union. For 14 years he was
an official of the Metal Trades Federation of Unions and the Newcastle Trades Hall Council over various periods.

He was, most importantly, Minister for Transport and Minister for Civil Aviation in the Whitlam government. He started a tradition of Labor transport ministers coming from the Newcastle region, followed by Peter Morris and Bob Brown. He set out to provide Australia with a modernised and properly coordinated national transport policy and infrastructure, a task in which he had extraordinary success. He was an extremely successful and hardworking minister. He was the minister who initiated the construction of the Tarcoola to Alice Springs railway line, the starting point of the Alice to Darwin railway.

His other achievements include the establishment of Australian National Railways; the introduction of Commonwealth grants to the states to improve urban transport, which until then had been solely a state concern; the Road Grants Act, which provided federal funding to help divert traffic from residential areas and improve safety; and the establishment of the interstate commission to coordinate interstate transport policy. He oversaw the passing of the National Roads Act that created a national system of federally funded highways. He was also minister at the time of the purchase by Qantas of the first of the Boeing 747 jumbo jets and gave permission for the Concorde to fly to Australia. He was, by any standards, over a very short period of time a very active minister.

In subsequent comments about Charlie, the Prime Minister of the day, Gough Whitlam, referred to him as the most effective and creative transport minister in Australia’s history. He was a minister responsible for bringing Charles Halton from Britain to run the department of transport. Interestingly, Gough was asked by a journalist what would happen to the government if he were to fall under a bus. Gough paid tribute to the success of Charlie Jones by replying, ‘With the improvements my government has initiated in urban transport, this is unlikely to happen.’

I said earlier that he was a traditional Labor man of the old school. On matters of immigration he shared many of the values and beliefs of the party of the fifties and the sixties. Those times have changed, but much of Charlie’s policy legacy endures. He was a nation builder, he was a champion for his community and he came in the great tradition of federal Labor ministers.

To the end he shared Labor’s compassion for the underdog. At the age of 83 he was still active in his local community, criticising Newcastle Council plans to reduce rates in high income areas. At all of the meetings that we had in the electorate, Charlie was always there. He always wanted to keep in touch; he always wanted to remain active. He remained committed to the Labor Party to the very end. He was still a delegate to his local FEC and Secretary of the Jesmond-North Lambton branch when he passed away.

He is survived by his wife, Doreen; his daughter, Fay; his son, Ken; and their families. He was married to Doreen for 67 years. Our condolences go to Doreen and to his family. It was a great contribution by a great Labor man. This House will mourn his passing, but he leaves a great legacy.

Mr ANDERSON (Gwydir—Deputy Prime Minister) (2.11 p.m.)—I join the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition in remembering Charlie Jones. He was known as just that: Charlie Jones. He actually had it painted on his office door. It is interesting to note over and above the comments that have been made that some of the contentious issues that he worked on have dwindled in our memories with the passage of time but others are still quite relevant. In
1975, the Anglo-French manufacturers of the Concorde flew it across the Nullarbor so that Australian officials could assess the noise effect of its sonic boom, because there were hopes that Qantas would buy the aircraft. Charlie Jones travelled to a remote homestead to listen so that he could report. He was able to say that the noise ‘would not have satisfied your kids or my grandchildren on cracker night’. Concorde’s sonic boom never became a problem, of course, and it now never will.

Charlie Jones ruled out Goulburn as an airport site because of its distance from Sydney, as a matter of interest. He ridiculed, too, a suggestion to build a floating airport. Both options are still considered from time to time, even though it is now quite clear that Sydney may never need a second airport. He also proposed that the Australian government should take over the New South Wales railway system. In a letter to the *Sydney Morning Herald* he said, ‘A national rail system would have the means to overcome the disadvantages inherent in state oriented decision making which has seriously inhibited the introduction of many long-overdue improvements and economies.’ Thirty years later we are still working with New South Wales on a plan—hopefully soon to come to fruition—to ensure the integration of the New South Wales interstate track into a truly national grid allowing for continuous operation from Brisbane to Melbourne to Adelaide to Perth.

Charlie Jones retired from parliament in 1983. I join with the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition in expressing my condolences to his family and his friends.

Ms GRIERSON (Newcastle) (2.13 p.m.)—As the current member for Newcastle, I rise to speak in condolence for Hon. Charles Keith Jones, affectionately known as C.K. or Charlie to all of us. Charlie Jones was a Labor man who became a true Labor leader. His grandfather was a founding member of the ALP in Newcastle, and Charlie remained until his death an active ALP member and supporter. Charlie was an active delegate to my Newcastle FEC and was regarded by other delegates as the guardian of Labor values and traditions. We were fortunate for his guidance. Charles Keith Jones represented the people of Newcastle as a councillor and as their member in the Australian parliament for a period of 36 years in total. In that time, Charlie never lost sight of his role and purpose. For him, public office was a privilege, and representing the working people was the greatest tribute and honour anyone could aspire to. His sense of duty to the people was always his guide, and the real test, he said, that should apply to any government and their decisions.

Charlie Jones was a Tighes Hill boy, educated at his local primary school and then at Cooks Hill High School. These were suburbs where hardship and struggle built vibrant and strong communities. He was a working man and a true believer in the fair go. After serving his apprenticeship he worked as a boilermaker at BHP and the State Dockyard at a time when shipbuilding and steel making ruled our town. His experiences made him a champion of the working man with a deep commitment to an industrial way of life which built the city of Newcastle but which sadly is now disappearing. He took up that cause through the boilermakers union and later in public office.

As a councillor for 12 years he became the youngest ever Mayor of Newcastle and the first Labor man to hold that high office. A visible legacy of his term in council is Blackbutt Nature Reserve in the heart of our city, which Charlie helped to have preserved for the people of Newcastle to enjoy forever. He went on to become the third member for Newcastle, serving from 1958 to 1983. In
that time, Charlie was never arrogant and never reserved in speaking out for Newcastle. In Old Parliament House he shared a tiny office with Tom Uren, Frank Crean and Jim Cairns—all Labor legends. Tom referred to Charlie as a very good minister and one of the straight left. There was no nonsense with Charlie; he was forthright and frank in his views and always called a spade a bloody shovel.

In his maiden speech as a member of the opposition backbench he pondered the government’s failure to rise to the challenges in our electorate of Newcastle: ever-growing unemployment resulting from technological change, the crisis in affordability and quality of housing, the appalling demise of the shipbuilding industry and the ongoing plight of pensioners. Those causes were dear to his heart forever. In his first speech he stated that mechanisation was welcomed, but he demanded for the working class movement the right to share in the proceeds. I quote Charlie’s words about the productivity gains from mechanisation, which typified his view of equity and social justice: ‘It should not be a one-way ticket with the employing class reaping all the benefits.’ Charlie would say that is as true today as it was then.

He also spoke of the then government’s attempts to weaken the trade union movement, and claimed that the government of that day had been elected on hollow catchcries and not realities. He urged that government to invest in a coal based chemical and liquid fuel industry for this country. He still held those views. He also criticised the government for their failure to grant Newcastle a television licence, their failure to support a local airport—which we now have—and their neglect of the shipbuilding industry. Foreign flags and the demise of the Australian National Line came in for special mention. Charlie would have been very pleased with the recent High Court decision upholding Australian working conditions for those employed on ships in Australian waters.

As Minister for Transport in the Whitlam government from 1972 to 1975 and as Minister for Civil Aviation from 1972 to 1973, C.K. Jones was part of an amazing time in Australia’s history. His greatest achievements included pioneering the national highway system we know today and merging shipping, land transport and aviation into one department. In that era it was the custom to name trains after public figures. Two Australian National Line locomotives were named the Gough Whitlam and the Charlie Jones—a powerful combination indeed. Perhaps not quite in the spirit of bipartisanship, the locomotive named the William McMahon was inevitably known by Charlie as the ‘Puffing Billy’.

Charlie Jones is on the record as taking a point of order seeking clarification from the then Speaker, Sir Billy Snedden. The Speaker had stated that a question can be asked but the questioner is not entitled to demand an answer to his question. Charlie rose on a point of order asking for clarification and whether that meant that question time should really be called questions without answers. He was quite an astute man.

But Charlie Jones was also a family man and a friend to many. He will be missed. On behalf of the people of Newcastle and his colleagues here, past and present, I convey my condolences and sincere sympathy to Charlie’s family: his wife, Doreen; his son, Ken; his daughter, Fay; and to other family members and friends. Doreen was his very much adored and usually obeyed wife. She was always part of Charlie’s strength and achievements and deserves our special thanks; and also condolences for the loss of her lifetime partner. The last time I spoke to Charlie was at the last meeting of the Jes-
mond and North Lambton branch of the ALP. He told me that he and Doreen were ageing and that she was ready to leave and move to a smaller home. He told me, though, that his North Lambton home was good enough for him and always would be and that he never wanted to leave the electorate of Newcastle. Charlie had his way in the end and can now rest in peace.

I was very privileged to have his support and encouragement, and I register my thanks for that. When preselection came for the seat of Newcastle, he told me straight that the candidate should be a man of the trades and industry. He told me, though, that a daughter of the working class, from a family of miners, dockers and wharfies, who grew up in Tighes Hill would have to be good enough for him. I will always try to be good enough for him. So, Charlie, the people of Newcastle and I salute and thank you.

Question agreed to, honourable members standing in their places.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE
Fuel: Ethanol

Mr CREAN (2.20 p.m.)—My question is to the Prime Minister. Prime Minister, do you recall telling the parliament that you had not discussed ethanol policy with Mr Dick Honan prior to your announcement on 12 September last year—a policy which has already benefited Mr Honan’s company to the tune of over $20 million in the last year? Prime Minister, doesn’t the record now show that a meeting between you and Mr Honan did take place on 1 August 2002 and that it involved discussion of ethanol policy? Prime Minister, why did you mislead the parliament and the Australian people on this very important issue?

Mr HOWARD—I thank the Leader of the Opposition for the question. The question that was asked of me—in fact there were several questions asked of me—related specifically to a shipment coming from Brazil. The meeting I had with Mr Honan on 1 August did not relate to that issue. I do not believe therefore that I have misled the House, and I reject the allegation that has been made. All of the questions that I answered in this series of questions were in the context of the shipment by the company, Trafalga. I would remind the Leader of the Opposition that the series of questions commenced with a question asked of the Treasurer by the member for Fraser, and it said as follows:

My question is to the Treasurer and concerns last week’s government announcements concerning the ethanol excise. Treasurer, can you confirm that Trafalga Fuels Australia’s contract to import ethanol was excise free when it was signed?

Then there was a question asked of me by the member for Chisholm, Anna Burke, which said:

My question is to the Prime Minister. Prime Minister, was the government contacted by the major Australian producer of ethanol or by any representative of his company or the industry association before its decision to impose fuel excise on ethanol? If so, when? Was the government urged to take action to prevent Trafalga Fuels Australia ...

All of these questions were in the context of the importation of that shipment from Brazil by Trafalga. They are all in that context, and it was in that context that I gave the answer that I did. I do not believe therefore that I have misled the parliament because, when I was asked these questions, I did not know of Trafalga’s importation nor, indeed, is it my understanding that Mr Honan knew of it. As evidence of that, on 28 August, Mr Honan wrote to me drawing attention to this shipment and arguing that a certain course of action be followed. In fact, I disclosed the existence of that letter during the series of questions I answered, so I reject the claim made by the Leader of the Opposition.
Indonesia: Terrorist Attacks

Mr GEORGIOU (2.24 p.m.)—My question is addressed to the Prime Minister. Would the Prime Minister outline to the House the government’s response to the bombing last week of the Marriott Hotel in Jakarta?

Mr HOWARD—I thank the member for Kooyong. I know that all members of the House would have been distressed at the bombing outside the Marriott Hotel in Jakarta last week. I took the opportunity the following day to speak to President Megawati to convey, on behalf of all Australians, not only our condolences at the loss of life but also the renewed determination and willingness of the Australian government and the Australian people to work as closely as possible with the government and the people of Indonesia to strengthen the joint effort to oppose terrorism in our region. I am happy to say that not only were there officers of the Australian Federal Police on the ground in Jakarta ready to offer assistance but we were able to send additional police officers the following day, particularly police officers very skilled in crime scene investigation work. The AFP continues to work very closely with the Indonesian police and a specialist team has already started forensic work at the bomb site.

It should be remembered by all members of this House that the overwhelming majority of those who died in this atrocity were Indonesian citizens and people of the Islamic faith. It totally repudiates the obscene claim made by the terrorists that, in launching terrorist attacks, they are avenging their Muslim brothers. In reality on this occasion, as on so many occasions, they have not avenged their Muslim brothers; they have killed their Muslim brothers and sisters. It is a reminder that terrorism is as repugnant to the basic tenets and instincts of Islam as it is to the instincts of Christianity and Judaism and, indeed, to the civilised values of people who hold no particular religious belief. It continues therefore to unite all of us in a common moral crusade against terrorism and that crusade has to be backed with strong cooperative action. It has to be backed with continued strong support for our intelligence agencies and cooperative action between the agencies of the countries in our region. Intelligence and information sharing are crucial and Australia’s network of bilateral memoranda of understanding on counter-terrorism attests to this.

The foreign minister is already working with Indonesia to arrange a regional ministerial conference on these matters, and I will have the opportunity of discussing these issues not only at the Pacific Island Forum later this week but also at the APEC leaders meeting in Thailand in October. The attack in Indonesia last week reminds us that terrorism is very much a grim reality of modern life. The fight against terrorism will go on for years, and it will require not only the combined cooperation and commitment of the agencies of our nation but also the cooperative efforts of the agencies of our nation and many others in our region.

Fuel: Ethanol

Mr CREAN (2.27 p.m.)—My question again is to the Prime Minister. I refer to his last answer in which he claimed only to have been answering questions on a shipment of ethanol from Brazil. Prime Minister, is it not true that the question asked of you on 19 September made no reference at all to the shipment of ethanol from Brazil and that you responded by saying that you had not spoken to Dick Honan on the issue of excise arrangements for the ethanol industry? Given that you did meet with Mr Honan on 1 August to discuss ethanol policy, why do you continue to mislead the parliament and the
Australian people about the discussions that you had with Mr Honan?

Mr HOWARD—I do not continue to mislead the public. The context of these questions was the shipment from Brazil. I did not know anything about the shipment from Brazil when these questions were asked nor, apparently, did Mr Honan. In fact, it is my understanding that the first time anybody in the government became aware of this was around 21, 22 or 23 August, which was three weeks after I met Mr Honan.

Economy: Performance

Mr NAIRN (2.29 p.m.)—My question is addressed to the Treasurer. Would the Treasurer outline to the House the prospects for the Australian economy at present? Which policies have helped to strengthen the economy and is the Treasurer aware of any alternative policy approaches?

Mr COSTELLO—I thank the honourable member for Eden-Monaro for his question and I acknowledge the wonderful work that he is doing in relation to the bushfire inquiry. Can I also inform him that the Australian economy continues to grow notwithstanding a very difficult international situation, as confirmed by the Reserve Bank’s statement on monetary policy released today, which begins by saying:

The year to date has been marked by a contrast between a disappointing global environment and a resilient domestic economy.

As the statement points out, the average growth in G7 countries in 2003 is about 1½ per cent and in Australia, although the economy has slowed as forecast in the current financial year, the growth rate of around three per cent is double the G7 average. That has been also at a time when Australia has gone through the worst drought ever recorded. Normally a US recession would bring on an Australian recession and normally a drought would bring on an Australian recession. To have both together and to have the Australian economy continuing to grow, albeit at below trend, shows how resilient the Australian economy has been in the last year. One of the things that have underpinned that is the strong fiscal position that this government has put Australia into. This government has now delivered five budget surpluses, which are more budget surpluses than any government since at least the Whitlam era, and is budgeting for a sixth in the current financial year, unlike the United States, the UK, France, Germany, Japan or, indeed, most of the rest of the world.

We have noted comments emanating from the opposition that they may now be coming around to the view of changing their policy and supporting the government in running a strong fiscal policy. Every now and then you come across a little gem of policy, and there was a little gem of policy from the new spokesman for the opposition, Mr Latham, in the Weekend Australian on 2 August:

On his core strategy Latham is clear—Labor is “the party of fiscal rigour”, unlike the Howard Government. It is the party of the budget surplus, not deficit.

Well, the Labor Party delivered $80 billion in deficits and the coalition has delivered five budget surpluses and that made Labor the party of the surplus and the coalition the party of weak fiscal rigour! Every now and then when people say politics is not entertaining, you read something from the shadow Treasurer—‘Labor is the party of fiscal rigour’. If Labor wants to demonstrate its conversion to the party of fiscal rigour, here is the first test: pass the government’s PBS measures. The government’s PBS measures are worth $1.3 billion of savings. They have been rejected twice in the Senate. A demonstration of the fiscal rigour of the Australian Labor Party would be the ability of the member for Werriwa to overturn the decisions of those that he now attacks for being
fiscally profligate and to support the PBS measures in the Senate. That would be a start. Let me give a few other ideas: Labor’s coastguard—$600 million unfunded; Labor’s higher education policy that the shadow minister put—another $300 million black hole; Labor’s health policy—a billion dollars of new spending, and it was described by the opposition leader on 19 May in these terms:

As for the billion dollars—

he said on 2UE—

some of it comes off the surplus, some $500 million over the course of four years.

So we have got health policy, which is $500 million; we have got blocked measures of $1.3 billion; we have got a coastguard at $600 million and we have got higher education at $300 million—and that makes Labor the party of fiscal rigour! If there is any decency that is to come from the opposition on these measures, the opposition would pass those PBS measures immediately. Labor is running around like a drunken sailor looking for a taxicab in Sydney on a Saturday night with measures to spend, at last count— unfunded—over $2 billion; over $2 billion and heading northwards.

Fuel: Ethanol

Mr CREAN (2.35 p.m.)—My question is again to the Prime Minister and I refer the Prime Minister to his answer on 19 September last year when he told the parliament:

The member asked me what communication my office had with Manildra relating to the decision to change excise arrangements for the ethanol industry. As I stated earlier, I had not spoken to Dick Honan on this issue.

Prime Minister, given that the record now shows that you did meet with Mr Honan on this very issue on 1 August 2002, why do you continue to mislead the parliament and the Australian people in saying you did not have a discussion with him on this issue?

Mr HOWARD—In answer to the Leader of the Opposition, ‘this issue’ to which I am referring is the decision which was made and announced on 12 September by me, which triggered this series of questions in parliament, which of course was based on the pending importation of the shipment from Brazil.

Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER—Order! The Prime Minister has the call.

Ms Macklin interjecting—

The SPEAKER—The member for Jagajaga!

Mr HOWARD—The chain is very simple.

Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER—Order! The Prime Minister has the call and the same courtesies that are extended to the Leader of the Opposition will be extended to him.

Mr HOWARD—On 12 September we announced certain arrangements which withdrew the excise exemption and introduced a production subsidy, and the pattern of the package of questions that began to be asked on 17 September sought to draw a link between that decision and some allegedly improper support for the Manildra company. The big revelation that the Labor Party is talking about was a meeting between me and Mr Honan on 1 August.

Mr Crean—Which you said didn’t happen.

The SPEAKER—The Leader of the Opposition is defying the chair.

Mr HOWARD—Of course it did, and that actually goes to the very nub of the issue because the answers I gave about not discussing this issue with Mr Honan were based on the fact that we did not discuss that issue, because, as the Leader of the Opposition
helpfully interjects, neither of us knew about it. Therefore, we could not have discussed it.

Aviation: Second Sydney Airport

Mr TICEHURST (2.37 p.m.)—My question is addressed to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Transport and Regional Services. Is the Deputy Prime Minister aware of the new proposals to build a second airport in the Sydney basin? Would the Deputy Prime Minister advise the House of the results of work done to identify such sites? Are there any alternative policies?

Mr ANDERSON—I thank the honourable member for his question. It was only a little over two years ago that the coalition government thoroughly examined Sydney’s airport needs. It was a pretty exhausting process. We came to the conclusion that building white elephants at that point of time was in no-one’s interests because Sydney airport would clearly be able to handle the air traffic demand for many years to come. That was a good sound policy decision. It has proven to be even more durable than I could have imagined because of changing technology and better management practices. More people travelling on fewer aircraft and a whole range of other management practices have meant that, even within the very real and remaining constraints that we put in place—LTOP, the curfew and so forth—to ensure that nobody is too badly disadvantaged or affected by noise, our judgment has been confirmed as appropriate. We have said that we will review it in 2005, but even that review looks to me as though it is many years premature.

I am asked about proposals to restart the search for a second Sydney airport site. For reasons that are inexplicable in policy terms and pretty hard to understand, I have to say, in political terms, the Leader of the Opposition has said that Labor will build a second airport and has reopened the whole debate. The shadow minister for transport, interestingly, has said that Labor is looking at ‘a variety of options,’ but he will not tell anyone where they are. This is just not good enough. The opposition have to come clean on the secret undisclosed locations they are considering. We have to know where they are. There are a couple floating around—

Mr Murphy interjecting—

Mr ANDERSON—There we are! There is one. Which one is that? One shadow minister has proposed Wilton or Darkes Forest. Let me go to Wilton, which is near Wollongong. Depending on the runway alignment, aircraft could fly directly over Wollongong and create a significant level of noise for communities such as Picton and Wilton. Eighty-six per cent of the Wilton site is in the catchment for Sydney’s water supply. But Labor has raised it explicitly as an option, despite that problem of water contamination, which is why we did not look at it again. Labor has also proposed Darkes Forest, which is off the Princes Highway, as a possibility. An airport there would create enormous noise problems for people living in Bulli, Thirroul and Coledale. I wonder what they think of that proposal. But it also ought to be noted that, for a lot of the year, it could not be used anyway. It is subject to fogs that can last for more than a day; it is much more of a problem there than it is in Canberra. It is also affected by windshear and turbulence.

One way or another, I think members of the House would understand that there are not many potential sites in the Sydney basin that I have not heard of. I want to say to the Labor Party that there are residents in a whole lot of areas who want to know what this variety of locations that the shadow minister for transport is thinking about might be. The residents of Canberra, Newcastle, Goulburn, Warnervale, Somersby, Scheyville, Londonderry, Bringelly, Galston, Duffys
Forest, Richmond and Windsor might like to know. All of them have a right to know if it is their backyard in which Labor’s secret proposal is to be located.

Labor refloating this at this time, when it is obvious it is not needed, demonstrates that they are incapable of making good policy. Firstly, they are planning to impose a second airport on the city with all its costs. It would be a white elephant. The international experience plainly says that, if you build on these things before they are needed, no-one is going to use it and nobody is going to go there. We do not need it, so it is not needed for policy reasons. Secondly, they say people need certainty. Where is the certainty? All the people in those various locations around eastern Australia need to know where it might be. This is stunningly incompetent. I cannot help agreeing with one Labor MP’s comment about the shadow minister for transport, who comes from Sydney. If anyone ought to understand the politics of Sydney it ought to be—even though he lives in Melbourne—the shadow minister for transport, Martin Ferguson. One of his colleagues said, ‘He puts himself up as a policy man, but in the end he is just a brawler.’ That leaves the new proponent of fiscal rigour in this country—that is, of course, the member for Werriwa, who only recently wrote an article about Badgerys in which, as a very strong piece of advocacy for this much-needed piece of infrastructure, he said:

It has the potential to generate 30,000 jobs in a region which has the nation’s highest rate of unemployment.

That is not right, I understand, but that is what he said. He continued:

Incredibly an essential piece of public infrastructure has been delayed by 14 years by a lobby group representing 0.1 per cent of the electorate. This is a black hole in Australia’s microeconomic reform record.

He went on to say that good policy and good politics are still synonymous. By that record, he plainly believes that Badgerys should still be built, but he just will not tell his leader.

**Fuel: Ethanol**

Mr LATHAM (2.44 p.m.)—My question is to the Prime Minister. I will refer to his answer on 19 September last year when he advised the House that he would check whether he had spoken to Dick Honan in relation to excise arrangements for the ethanol industry; not the Brazilian boat but excise arrangements for the ethanol industry. The Prime Minister informed the House that he had ‘not spoken to Dick Honan on this issue’. Did the Prime Minister check with the departmental officer present at his meeting with Mr Honan on 1 August 2002, with the written record of that meeting dated 2 August, or with any of the seven departmental officers that received a copy of that record? Why was the Prime Minister able to find 16 letters on the ethanol issue and report those to the parliament on 19 September but was unable to find his departmental record of the 1 August meeting with Dick Honan?

Mr HOWARD—As I have already indicated to the House, these questions were asked and the answers were given in the context of the shipments from Brazil. That remains the position.

Mr Latham—I seek leave to table the ‘Record of meeting, Manildra Group, 1 August 2002’ of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet.

Leave granted.

**Solomon Islands**

Dr WASHER (2.45 p.m.)—My question is addressed to the Minister for Foreign Affairs. Will the minister update the House on the progress of the Australian led Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands?
Mr DOWNER—Firstly, I thank the honourable member for Moore for his interest in the operation that is being undertaken in the Solomon Islands. The Australian-led Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands, RAMSI, which is part of Operation Helpem Fren, was deployed on 24 July. It is essentially a police-led operation but has military and civilian personnel supporting it. It comprises personnel from Australia, Fiji and New Zealand, and they have been joined by personnel from Papua New Guinea and Tonga, making a total at the moment of around 1,800 personnel, and at full strength it will be nearer to 2,000 personnel.

Over the two days 31 July to 1 August, I visited Honiara with my New Zealand counterpart and friend, Phil Goff. It was very clear over that brief period that the impact of our mission had had a significant effect on public confidence. I was really very pleasantly surprised by the strength of the mission and its impact. We met with the Prime Minister, members of the cabinet and other community leaders, as well as the opposition. Right across the board they thanked Australia for the leadership that it was showing and the other countries that were involved in the operation. There seemed to be no resistance at all to this initiative.

I was told while I was in Honiara that the Solomon Islands Development Trust had conducted a reasonably scientific door-to-door opinion poll of 2,200 locals. It showed there was 97 per cent support for the assistance mission. One women’s leader whom I met with in Honiara said that the excitement amongst local Solomon Islanders on the first day of the deployment was like, as she put it, Christmas Day, and she was somebody who had some reservations initially about the idea of the deployment. The immediate priority of this mission is to restore law and order in Honiara and then extend the restoration of law and order to other parts of the country. Clear progress is evident. Government officials and other public officers can now perform their duties free of any intimidation, and the public now have confidence to report acts of crime to the police, including past offences.

Obviously a critical issue is going to be the effectiveness of the gun amnesty. This is a 21-day amnesty which will be completed on the 21st of this month. Honourable members might be interested to know that in the first 10 days of the amnesty over 950 guns have been handed in or otherwise secured, and many of these have been destroyed on the spot during village peace ceremonies. The fact that 950 guns have been surrendered, many of which have been destroyed, since the amnesty was introduced is simply an extraordinary achievement. It far exceeds my expectations. The assistance mission so far is proving to be an unqualified success. I note, for example, that Nick Warner, the special coordinator of the mission, and Ben McDevitt, the senior Australian Federal Police officer there, have met with a number of militant leaders to urge them to hand in their weapons before the deadline, and they have started to do so. I hope that Harold Keke will surrender weapons to the police shortly, as he has undertaken.

In conclusion, as well as the mission is going, we have to face up to the fact that after 21 August it could become a little more difficult, because if there are guns that have not been handed in by 21 August, they will be found and collected. Those who have retained weapons illegally after 21 August will face penalties of up to 10 years imprisonment and substantial fines. It is going to be very important that the gun amnesty continues with the extraordinary degree of success that has been demonstrated so far. After 21 August, if there are guns to be found, the mission will find them, and it will collect them and bring them in. I do not have any
illusions about that being the most dangerous part of the mission. I think that, in the moment of exuberance and confidence that we have now, we should reflect that the most difficult part of this mission is no doubt ahead of us.

Fuel: Ethanol

Mr Latham (2.50 p.m.)—My question is to the Prime Minister. Again, I refer the Prime Minister to his answer on 19 September last year when he said that a search had been made and checks undertaken of communications between his office and Manildra. The Prime Minister assured the House that he had not spoken to Dick Honan on the question of ethanol excise arrangements. When did the Prime Minister become aware that he had in fact spoken to Dick Honan about ethanol excise and that his department had prepared a record of his meeting with Mr Honan on 1 August 2002 detailing this very fact?

Mr Howard—The context in which these questions were asked—and let me remind the member for Werriwa—

Honourable members interjecting—

The Speaker—Order! Standing order 55 obliges everybody to remain silent when someone has the call.

Mr Howard—Let me remind the member for Werriwa of the question asked by the member for Fraser of the Treasurer on 17 September:

My question is to the Treasurer and concerns last week’s government announcements concerning the ethanol excise. Treasurer, can you confirm that Trafigura Fuels Australia’s contract to import ethanol was excise free when it was signed? Can you also confirm that the government’s new arrangements, introduced after the contract was signed and entered into, will impose a crippling $5 million excise bill on a contract which was excise free when it was signed?

Then the first question to me on that same day, from the member for Chisholm, which elicited the comment which I continue to hold to, that I had not discussed this matter with Mr Honan, was in these terms: My question is to the Prime Minister. Prime Minister, was the government contacted by the major Australian producer of ethanol or by any representative of his company or the Industry Association before its decision to impose fuel excise on ethanol? If so, when? Was the government urged to take action to prevent Trafigura Fuels Australia from importing a shipment of ethanol from Brazil at a commercially competitive price?

Mr Latham—Mr Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The point of order is on the question of relevance: I have not asked a question—

The Speaker—The member for Werriwa will resume her seat. By every measure applied by any Speaker, the Prime Minister is being relevant.

Mr Crean—On the point of order of relevance, Mr Speaker: the question clearly went to the question of 19 September. The Prime Minister is answering—

The Speaker—I have ruled on the matter of relevance. The Prime Minister has the call.

Mr Howard—Just for the benefit of those opposite, the member for Chisholm concluded her question as follows: Was the government urged to take action to prevent Trafigura Fuels Australia from importing a shipment of ethanol from Brazil at a commercially competitive price?

Plainly, that question was about the behaviour of the government in relation to that shipment. That is the context in which this was asked. That is the context in which I gave the answers I have given, and it is why I asserted then and I continue to assert that I have not misled the House. The whole thrust of these questions is to try and allege that by
this decision we had done some kind of special favour for a particular company.

Mr Crean—That’s right.

Mr HOWARD—’That’s right,’ he says. You can always rely on the Leader of the Opposition to helpfully interject. He said, ‘That’s right.’ That was the whole thrust. I have demonstrated that at the time I had this meeting with Mr Honan, on 1 August, I did not know about the Trafigua shipment; neither, apparently, did Honan.

Mr Crean—You didn’t know about it.

Mr HOWARD—Once again, helpfully, the Leader of the Opposition has interjected, saying, ‘You didn’t know about it.’ I did not know about it then, and that is why the answer that I gave was palpably correct and why I have not misled the House. The strange thing about the allegation that we were meant to have done enormous favours for Dick Honan is that the two things that Mr Honan’s company wanted most of all were, firstly, for the government to mandate—

Mr Latham—I rise on a point of order, Mr Speaker.

Dr Emerson interjecting—

The SPEAKER—Before I recognise the member for Werriwa, I invite him to resume his seat. I will call on him immediately after I have dealt with another matter. The member for Rankin will withdraw the statement he made about the Prime Minister.

Dr Emerson—I withdraw the statement that I made, saying that the Prime Minister lied.

Mr Latham—Mr Speaker, on the question of relevance, the Prime Minister has been going for some time now and he has not once mentioned his answer on 19 September, which was the sole purpose of the question that I put to him.

The SPEAKER—The Prime Minister was asked a question about the search for records in his office on the question of meetings with the Manildra Group—as I noted it, about dates and conversations. By any measure he is referring exclusively to Manildra exercises and is relevant.

Mr HOWARD—Continuing what I was saying, the argument is that we have done some special deal for this company. The two things that this company have advocated and lobbied not only the government but, I suspect, also the opposition for fairly actively over the past few months are, firstly, for the government to mandate a minimum use of ethanol in a blend of petrol and ethanol, and, secondly, they have argued vigorously against the imposition of a 10 per cent cap, because they are, in fact, blending ethanol up to levels of 20 per cent. Has the government acted in response to either of those pieces of advocacy? No. The government has not mandated a minimum. The government, a few months ago, having got proper scientific advice on the matter, introduced a 10 per cent cap for ethanol. So not only does the opposition leader have his facts wrong but he has his conspiracy theory wrong as well.

Workplace Relations: Building Industry

Mrs MOYLAN (2.57 p.m.)—My question is addressed to the Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations. Would the minister update the House on progress made by the interim building task force? How has the task force responded to complaints about illegality in the building and construction industry?

Mr ABBOTT—I thank the member for Pearce for her question. The establishment of the interim task force in the building industry demonstrates this government’s determination to replace the law of the jungle with the rule of law in this vital industry. Particularly in Western Australia, the building industry royal commission identified no fewer than 230 separate instances of unlawful conduct

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in this industry. It was for that reason that the government set up the interim task force, with a brief to try to secure zero tolerance of industrial law breaking.

I can inform the House that the task force has 51 investigations currently under way, 14 matters have been referred to other agencies for possible prosecution, nine briefs of evidence are in preparation, and the task force has five prosecutions currently before the courts. The Chief Executive of the Master Builders Association said recently:

Even with limited powers, the task force is already making a difference, causing those who operate on a basis of intimidation and standover tactics to realise that this sort of behaviour won’t go unpunished.

Concern for the rule of law is certainly not an idiosyncrasy of the Howard government. I note that the New South Wales Police recently launched a prosecution against a prominent official for malicious damage and a Victorian court recently convicted 16 unionists for various offences arising from a violent rampage in a Melbourne factory. The rule of law is making a welcome reappearance after a long and regrettable absence from our workplaces.

**Fuel: Ethanol**

**Mr CREAN** (3.00 p.m.)—My question is to the Prime Minister. In your answer on 19 September you stated:

I have, on checking, found that a number of letters were received on this general issue—not just on ethanol but on the general issue. In fact, my office received 16 in all, from different sources, from January until now.

Prime Minister, if the issue you were referring to in your answer today was simply that related to Trafigura and, as you have also admitted today, no correspondence was received by your office until about 20 August last year on that issue, why did you disclose the existence of documents going back to January but not disclose your meeting with Mr Honan on 1 August?

**Mr HOWARD**—I remind the Leader of the Opposition of the central reality of this issue, and that is that the context of the questions asked of me was the shipment from Brazil.

**Opposition members interjecting**—

**Mr HOWARD**—Those opposite interject, but it was they who framed the questions. I did not frame the questions; the tactics committee of the opposition framed the questions. They framed the questions about an ethanol shipment, and the reason they framed them about a shipment from Brazil was that I had made a statement five days earlier and they thought, ‘Aha, this is a conspiracy between the government and Mr Honan and Manildra. He’s made this statement, and we will ask a whole lot of questions.’ Well, I am quite happy: if the opposition want to ask me questions about an issue, I will answer those questions, and I have made it plain that the context in which I answered these questions was the context in which they were put to me, and that was in relation to this particular shipment. I disclosed particularly the existence of a letter from Mr Honan dealing with the shipment, because, quite apart from anything that may be said by the Leader of the Opposition, I had absolutely no difficulty in disclosing to the House that I had received a letter from Mr Honan on 28 August about the Brazilian shipment. So, if he had specifically raised the Brazilian shipment with me during a personal conversation, why would I not with ease have mentioned that? In other words, if I had no reason to suppress public knowledge about the letter about the Brazilian shipment, why would I have had a reason to suppress the existence of a conversation about the Brazilian shipment? It is obvious that the discussion I had on 1 August—which has the opposition salivating—was not
about the subject matter of their questioning, and it is equally obvious that I have not misled the House.

Mining Industry

Mr HAASE (3.03 p.m.)—My question is addressed to the Acting Minister for Industry, Tourism and Resources. Would the acting minister inform the House of the contribution the mining sector makes to the Australian economy, particularly to job creation and regional Australia? Is the acting minister aware of any threats to the future growth of this vital sector?

Mr HOCKEY—I thank the member for Kalgoorlie for his question and for his obvious ongoing interest in the welfare of the mining sector. Mining is a very important industry for Australia. It always has been and hopefully always will be. It represents around nine per cent of Australia’s economy, with exports in excess of $43 billion. Nearly one-third of our total exports come from mining, and it is a very important employer. There are 83,000 people employed in the Australian mining industry, up from 78,000 in 2001, so it is a growing industry in employment, and it is also a growing industry in exports.

Last week along came the Labor Party and proposed a half billion dollar export tax on the mining industry. I was trying to find out where this detailed export tax policy of the Labor Party’s was, and I found it in their higher education policy. In their higher education policy there are 28 photographs of the Leader of the Opposition and just one line saying that they are going to increase the tax on the mining industry—nearly half a billion dollars!

Mr Howard—How popular will they be in Western Australia?

Mr HOCKEY—The Prime Minister asks how popular Labor will be in Western Australia. The Chief Executive of the Minerals Council of Australia says that the added cost to the miners would not be offset in any way and would flow directly to their bottom line. He said:

This is bad policy, poorly presented and done with no consultation with the industry—I don’t know anyone who saw this coming.

That is quite common at the Labor Party. The member for Hotham did not know it was coming: it was a piece of four by two at the back of the neck. What is the impact on the small miners? David McSweeney who is managing director of Gindalbie estimated that the federal opposition’s plan would directly cost the company an extra $250,000 a year, but he said the broader impact would be far more significant. He said:

For a small company like Gindalbie that’s a quarter of a million dollars coming directly out of our exploration campaign which could add another year’s mine life, because that’s been the history to date...

He goes on to say:

... every year we can keep going, we produce another $25 million to $30 million in gold for export.

This little company in Western Australia, in the member for Kalgoorlie’s electorate, is producing that. The Labor Party is slugging the mining industry, because the Labor Party is bereft of ideas. At a time when the mining industry is doing it pretty tough with international competition and the rising Australian dollar, along comes the Labor Party and slaps a half billion dollar tax on the mining industry. On the coalition side, we want to get rid of taxes on exports; on the Labor side, they want to increase them. It is cheapjack politics, and it is common for the Leader of the Opposition, when the going gets tough, to slug those who are creating the most genuine benefit for people out there in regional Australia.
**Fuel: Ethanol**

Mr CREAN (3.07 p.m.)—My question is to the Prime Minister. I ask: does he recall his comments in August 1995 when he said: We want to assert the very simple principle that truth is absolute, truth is supreme, truth is never disposable in national political life.

So said the Prime Minister. But with commentators like Andrew Bolt saying that the Prime Minister has betrayed himself and the parliament by not telling the truth about his meeting with Mr Honan, isn’t it time, Prime Minister, to fess up and be man enough to admit that you got it wrong, that you did meet with Mr Honan but that you told the parliament you hadn’t?

Mr HOWARD—Even in his questions the Leader of the Opposition cannot get his own assertions correct. The fact that I met Mr Honan is not in dispute. It is not in dispute. I am not the only one who has met Mr Honan. You used to meet him fairly regularly when you were a minister in the Keating government. That is not the issue. The issue is whether what I said in parliament regarding the shipment of ethanol from Brazil was correct, and nothing that the Leader of the Opposition has said, after 45 or 50 minutes of questioning, has altered the fact that I did not discuss the Trafigura shipment in my meeting on 1 August with Mr Honan. That was the basis of what I said then and that is the basis of my continuing to reject the absurd claim by the Leader of the Opposition.

**Crime: Money Laundering**

Ms GAMBARO (3.09 p.m.)—My question is addressed to the Attorney-General. Would the Attorney-General advise the House what steps the government is taking to strengthen Australia’s ability to combat money laundering?

Mr WILLIAMS—I thank the member for Petrie for her question and for her continuing interest in the security of Australians. The Howard government are committed to combating terrorism and other multijurisdictional crimes. As part of our comprehensive approach to stamping out terrorist and multijurisdictional criminal activities, it is vital that we cut off the flow of money supporting them. Our track record on this is quite clear. We have implemented comprehensive terrorism legislation to prevent and deter terrorist activity wherever possible. This includes strong legislation and processes to deal with terrorist financing and supporting the fine work of AUSTRAC.

But, as a result of limits in the Australian Constitution, we lack the power to enact comprehensive money-laundering offences. An effective national regime to combat money laundering requires comprehensive offences under Commonwealth law. Under the Constitution, the Commonwealth has power to enact some money-laundering offences in certain circumstances, but it is not a comprehensive power. There is a gap in the Commonwealth’s legislative power. This gap is recognised by the states and territories, and if it is not addressed then there is a risk of a Commonwealth prosecution failing on technical grounds.

States can assist by removing any doubt in this area by expressly referring power to the Commonwealth to enact comprehensive offences. This would be consistent with the commitment of the states at the leaders summit on terrorism and multijurisdictional crime in April last year. At the summit, the Prime Minister and state and territory leaders agreed to reform money-laundering offences to create effective offences. They agreed to a reference of powers to the Commonwealth if necessary. Given the gap in the Commonwealth’s constitutional powers, this reference is clearly necessary.

At last week’s meeting of the Standing Committee of Attorneys-General here in
Canberra, I requested the states to refer the relevant powers to the Commonwealth. Regrettably the states indicated they would not refer power to the Commonwealth in this vital area. This is a worrying setback to the national cause of preventing money laundering and the criminal activity that it supports. The states’ uncooperative attitude was taken despite assurances that the Commonwealth did not seek to assume sole responsibility for investigating and prosecuting these activities. Comprehensive Commonwealth offences would continue to operate concurrently with state and territory offences. The Howard government remain committed to taking all necessary steps to combating money laundering. We will continue to pursue this issue with the states and we look forward to greater cooperation from them to ensure seamless and effective operation of laws combating money laundering.

**Fuel: Ethanol**

Mr CREAN (Hotham—Leader of the Opposition) (3.13 p.m.)—My question is to the Prime Minister. I ask: does he recall saying in his time in opposition:  

The simple principle ... here boils down to whether the man holding the supreme office in this country tells the truth to this Parliament or not.

If the Prime Minister really were the national leader he aspires to be, he would be big enough to come into this parliament and say, ‘Look, I’m sorry; I got it wrong.’ Why is the Prime Minister never big enough to live up to these words, never big enough to come up into the parliament and say, ‘I’m sorry; I got it wrong—wrong on kids overboard and now wrong on ethanol and the meeting with Dick Honan’?

The SPEAKER—Before I recognise the Prime Minister, I would remind those framing questions that questions should not contain imputations. I have allowed the question to stand.

Mr HOWARD—The question of what sort of leader I am is a matter for the Australian people to judge—not the Leader of the Opposition and not me. I am very happy on all occasions to submit myself to the judgment of the Australian people and I look forward to the next occasion when I submit myself to the judgment of the Australian people, alongside the Leader of the Opposition.

**PRIME MINISTER**

Censure Motion

Mr CREAN (Hotham—Leader of the Opposition) (3.14 p.m.)—by leave—I move:

That this House censure the Prime Minister for his ongoing pattern of deceit in:

1. falsely denying on 17, 18 and 19 September 2002, that he had met with Mr Dick Honan of the Manildra Group prior to the Government’s decisions on ethanol that overwhelmingly benefited the Manildra Group;

2. falsely justifying his misleading statements to the Parliament about the meeting with Mr Honan as not being relevant to the questions asked of him on 17, 18 and 19 September 2002;

3. not releasing full details of the record of meeting or other documents relevant to the origin of the Government’s ethanol policy;

4. not protecting consumers by not capping ethanol-blending with petrol and not requiring the labelling of petrol-ethanol blends when announcing the Government’s decisions on 12 September 2002 to provide a production subsidy on ethanol, all decisions which directly benefited the Manildra Group, including by over $20 million in the last financial year;

5. continuing to allow ethanol with blends above 10 percent to be sold, without labelling from 12 September 2002 until 30 June 2003, despite overwhelming advice from Environment Australia, the ACCC, and numerous Australian motor vehicle manufacturers and importers of the damage this
could cause to Australian motorists’ engines; and

(6) claiming that his 12 September 2002 ethanol policy announcement would benefit the sugar industry, when the principal beneficiary of his announcement was the Manildra Group, producers of ethanol from wheat.

This censure motion is moved because we have got a clear-cut case of the Prime Minister misleading the parliament and not telling the truth to the parliament and to the people of Australia. It is another example of ‘truth overboard’ by this Prime Minister. He said in response to a question, as we were getting towards the end of the questions, that the fact that he has met with Mr Honan is not in dispute. Prime Minister, you put it in dispute because you told this parliament—not once, but on three occasions—that you had no discussions with Mr Honan on ethanol policy. That is what you told the parliament. You were disputing the very fact of our assertion that you had had discussions with him. You were saying in this parliament that you had not.

This censure motion is clear cut. It is so simple: you met with Mr Honan but you told the parliament that you had not. The Prime Minister was asked on three occasions whether he had had a discussion with Mr Honan on ethanol policy. Three times he said he had not. On one occasion he said he had not after telling the parliament that he had checked the facts of the issue. As we know, the record tabled in this parliament during question time shows that he did have a meeting—he had it on 1 August—and that that meeting discussed at length details of ethanol policy and propositions that were being put by Mr Honan to the Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister says he is a friend. How can you forget a meeting with a friend, Prime Minister? And yet you told this parliament, having checked the record, that you had had no such meetings. It is true that, of the three questions, two mentioned Trafigura—but the questions were not limited to Trafigura. The Prime Minister continues to want to narrow the issue and to put it in context, as he calls it. It is your context, Prime Minister, and it is your traditional pattern: whenever you get into trouble, you seek to narrow the debate, to narrow it down on terms that you think you can defend. But the fact of the matter is that the question that was asked of you was not limited to Trafigura, and the question that I asked of you on the 19th did not mention Trafigura at all.

The defence of the Prime Minister is to say that he was responding on all occasions to that limitation—the limitation being Trafigura—which was one component of the first question, another component of the second question but not any component of the third question. It is what the Prime Minister calls the context in which he was answering all the questions. But that is not what the 19 September question was about, Prime Minister. It made no mention of Trafigura. What we are seeing here is another example of the pattern of deceit by this government. It uses one of three devices, if not all three, when it gets itself into strife: it limits the nature of the attack, it lies about what has been said and what has not been said, and then it denies that it has had any information given to it that would cause it to change its mind. Does this sound familiar? It happened with the ‘kids overboard’, it happened with the weapons of mass destruction, it happened with the uranium in Niger, and now it is happening with ethanol. This is a pattern of deceit. This is not just being caught out once. This Prime Minister did not want to fess up to a meeting because he knew that the nature of the meeting was that it involved the putting to him of policy initiatives that would, if implemented, benefit Mr Honan. It was a meeting with a mate.
The Prime Minister was being urged in this parliament to indeed take action in relation to ethanol policy: action to protect the motorists, action that would have capped the amount of ethanol that could go into a blend, action that would have disclosed on the label of blended product how much ethanol was in that product. That is what Labor had been calling for for more than 12 months. It is what his own Department of the Environment and Heritage was recommending. It is what the automotive manufacturers in this country were suggesting needed to occur. Why? It was because they had advice and they were warning motorists that ethanol over 10 per cent could void the warranty on motor vehicles; in other words, it could put at risk the motoring public who put the ethanol blended fuel into their tanks.

This is what the Prime Minister should have been protecting; this is the interest that he should have been looking after. Instead he ignored that advice and had a meeting which he would not own up to in this parliament. I ask the Prime Minister, in particular, but also those listening to this debate to have a look at the circumstances in which these questions were asked. I mentioned three questions. The first of those questions was on 17 September and it was from the member for Chisholm, Anna Burke. She asked:

Prime Minister, was the government contacted by the major Australian producer of ethanol or by any representative of his company or the Industry Association before his decision to impose fuel excise on ethanol? If so, when?

There was a second part to the question, which was:

Was the government urged to take action to prevent Trafigura Fuels Australia from importing a shipment of ethanol from Brazil at a commercially competitive rate?

There were two parts to the question, but the Prime Minister now wants to limit it to the second part. That is not what his answer was on the day. The first part of the question was: was he contacted by the major producer or the industry association? The Prime Minister said:

Speaking for myself, I did not personally have any discussions, from recollection, with any of them.

He said that, with regard to the two organisations—Manildra and the industry association—he had no discussions with ‘any of them’. There is no qualification in that answer by the Prime Minister. There is no reference to the Trafigura example. There is no reference to the second part of the question, but there is a specific response to the first part of the question. There cannot be any quibble about this, Prime Minister. You said on the day, ‘I did not personally have any discussions … with any of them.’ That, Prime Minister, was misleading this parliament, and you know it.

We then go to the next day, when the then shadow Treasurer—

Mr Costello interjecting—

Mr CREAN—He was the shadow Treasurer and, in that capacity, he had responsibility for ethanol. When he asked whether the government had been contacted by the office of a major Australian producer of ethanol before making the decision to impose fuel excise on that product, you, Prime Minister, answered that you had no personal recollection of any such discussions. Even the member for Fraser was recasting the question not in terms of Trafigura but in terms of a decision to impose fuel excise on the product. It was a question with general application to the industry, and it did not mention at that point the issue of the fuel shipment coming from Brazil. In response to that question, Prime Minister, you said:

The answer I gave yesterday was based upon recollection of personal contact with me.

You then said:
I will be happy to have a look at whether there were any communications. I think I may have said yesterday that it would not surprise me if there had been communications from the company. Why not? This is a democracy ... Let me say that this idea that there is something criminal or sinister and that a company or a citizen who believes that an event is going to disadvantage them commercially has no right to put a view to government of the day ...

Why then did you hide the fact that you had had the meeting? If there was nothing wrong with the meeting, and if you are waxing lyrical about that, why did you not simply own up to it in the parliament? Prime Minister, you then said:

As far as I am concerned, the government is not going to conduct business on the basis that people who believe they have a case to put and a request to make to the government are prevented from doing so because they are a successful Australian company. Of course I know Mr Honan. I can tell you ... the first time I met him ...

The Prime Minister can remember the first time he met his mate Mr Honan but he cannot remember the last time he met him. He cannot remember the time he met him on 1 August when they just happened to be having a talk not just about what might be happening in the local football—not just sharing a social chat—but about ethanol. Mr Honan came to the Prime Minister, as we know from the minute that has been tabled, to talk about ethanol and the policy for the Australian ethanol industry, and to say that they had engaged Ernst and Young to develop a model for the introduction of a renewable fuel based on ethanol. He said:

It includes a mandated maximum ethanol limit of possibly up to 10 per cent, retention of the excise exemption for ethanol and the payment of a producer credit to ethanol producers to enable Australian ethanol producers to compete with the cheaper Brazilian product.

Does that sound familiar? The production payment was exactly what the government introduced by way of policy. Who is the biggest beneficiary of that in the country? Manildra. Is there any doubt about that? This is where the Prime Minister says:

Nothing that has been done by me or the government in this area has been done to confer any benefit on a particular individual or a particular company.

But what about the answer to a question on notice to Senator Minchin that confirms that over $20 million has been paid to Manildra—over 96 per cent of the production subsidy up until 30 June? I think 96 per cent is a pretty significant conferral of benefit. Ninety-six per cent of the total amount of subsidy goes to his mate’s company, and the Prime Minister says there is nothing wrong with it. The Prime Minister says that he forgot about the meeting where this was all being put on the table. ‘I did not even know we had had such a meeting,’ says the Prime Minister. What hypocrisy! What deceit! What misleading of the parliament can you get up to next time, Prime Minister?

I have done the right thing in this debate. I have put in proper context the two questions that the Prime Minister wants to narrow. The two questions did refer to Trafigura, but they were not limited to Trafigura. I put the broader context in which those questions were asked and the Prime Minister’s categorical answer to them was that he had not had a meeting. I asked the question again on 19 September without any reference to Trafigura. It was a question to the Prime Minister about ethanol policy and ethanol blending, and it was about saving Australian motorists and doing the right thing by them. I then referred to what the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry had said: the Prime Minister would not agree to a 10 per cent limit on blending if it affected the operations of Manildra. I asked the Prime Minister why he did not ‘own up to the real reason that you are not protecting motorists from
having their engines wrecked by high etha-
nol fuel’. In essence, it was because he was
looking after the interests of Mr Honan and
his company.

The Prime Minister said that he had gone
off and checked all of the documents. He
said, ‘I have had a search made and this is
the latest advice I have.’ Regarding what
communication his office had had with
Manildra relating to the decision to change
excise arrangements for the ethanol industry,
he said:

As I stated earlier, I had not spoken to Dick Ho-
nan on this issue. I have, on checking, found that
a number of letters were received on this general
issue...

How is it, Prime Minister, that, when you
checked the correspondence and found out
that 16 items of correspondence had come in,
the check did not reveal that you had had a
meeting with Mr Honan which canvassed the
issue of the production subsidy? The meeting
was minuted, and the minutes were sent to
the head of your department and to six others
in your department. Are you trying to tell
me, Prime Minister, that when you came into
this parliament and denied on three occa-
sions that you had had discussions with Mr
Honan on ethanol policy your phone did not
ring? Are you saying that your office was
not contacted by one of those seven and that
no-one said: ‘The Prime Minister has a seri-
ous problem here, because we did have a
meeting. We had note-takers at the meeting
and we have a record of it.’ Yet the Prime
Minister remains silent.

He was asked that question on 19 Sep-
tember last year—almost 12 months ago.
The Prime Minister’s code of conduct says
quite categorically that, if a minister mis-
leads, whether it is knowingly or unknow-
ingly, he has the obligation to come in and
correct the record immediately. We know
why the Prime Minister did not want to cor-
rect the record. It was because the discus-
sions that were being had and the decisions
that were being taken were to the significant
advantage of a friend of his. That is why the
Prime Minister denied three times in this
parliament that he ever had such a meeting.
He wanted to hide behind the fiction that
representations had been made to the gov-
ernment but they had never come to him.

It sounds like ‘kids overboard’ again. Pe-
ter Reith was told that there were no kids
thrown overboard, but the truth was never
told to the Prime Minister. This is the Prime
Minister’s ‘truth overboard’. We have the
same pattern again. We have the Prime Min-
ister trying to limit the basis upon which the
attack is being made on him and limit the
context in which the questions were being
asked. Then he tries to come into the parlia-
ment and say that he had never met with Mr
Honan when in fact we know that he met
with Mr Honan—there is a record to show
that he met with him. The Prime Minister
said on three occasions that he had never had
discussions with Mr Honan. Then he says
that the correspondence came to the govern-
ment but it was kept from him.

There is a pattern of deceit here and that is
what this censure motion is about. Whilst it
does relate to the specifics of ethanol,
Manildra and the discussions, there is a
broader issue. If the Prime Minister is pre-
pared not to tell the truth in this parliament
on key issues associated with the policy af-
fecting motorists, what is the government
going to do, and how is the Australian public
going to treat the government, when it says
that it is going to save Medicare or look after
the security of Australians? There is not a
word that you can believe from this Prime
Minister. The pattern of deceit continues to
emerge. He had a meeting, yet he told the
parliament that he did not have the meeting.
There was significant benefit for a friend of
his arising from this meeting, but he told the
parliament that he did not have it. (Time expired)

The SPEAKER—Is the motion seconded?

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

Mr HOWARD (Bennelong—Prime Minister) (3.35 p.m.)—Naturally, I treat very seriously the motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition. I intend to deal very directly with the totally false allegations that have been made in the Leader of the Opposition’s speech. What the Leader of the Opposition is asking this parliament to believe is that I deliberately sought to conceal a meeting with somebody whom I have no particular reason to deny that I know or that I meet with from time to time. Dick Honan is not a close friend of mine.

Dr Emerson interjecting—

The SPEAKER—I indicate to the member for Rankin that I will deal very severely with him. The Leader of the Opposition was heard in silence and the same courtesy will be extended to the Prime Minister.

Mr HOWARD—I know Mr Honan. I believe that he is a very successful Australian businessman. Over the past few months, the Labor Party has done its level best to destroy his business. One of the consequences of the attack carried out by the Australian Labor Party on his business could well be the disemployment of several scores of Australians in regional areas of this country. I would ask the Leader of the Opposition to go down to the electorate of Gilmore—and, I might say, it is an electorate that the Labor Party once held—and ask the people of Gilmore what they think of the way in which he has tried to destroy a decent Australian businessman. That is fundamentally what the Leader of the Opposition has been about on this issue.

I do not disguise the fact that I know Mr Honan. I know hundreds of Australian businessmen and businesswomen. It is my job to do so. I find it extraordinary that the press treatment of this issue speaks of a secret meeting between me and Mr Honan. There is nothing secret. The meeting took place with a note taken by my department who recorded a record of interview and circulated it to about six or eight people.

Ms Macklin interjecting—

The SPEAKER—I warn the member for Jagajaga!

Mr HOWARD—I have no argument with the fact that I know Mr Honan and I respect his contribution to the Australian business community. He is not a close friend—I do not play golf with him—but he is a person whose contribution to employing Australians far exceeds the contribution of many of those who sit opposite. I think that ought to be said in his defence. It is all very easy for people to come into this parliament day after day and to run a campaign that has the effect of undermining a business and potentially destroying the jobs of scores of people who are employed by that business.

Mr Gavan O’Connor—The censure is not on him!

The SPEAKER—I warn the member for Corio!

Mr HOWARD—It is entirely another matter to establish—as the Leader of the Opposition has woefully and inadequately failed to do today—that I have misled the parliament. It is the Leader of the Opposition who is responsible for the questions asked on 17, 18 and 19 September. The Leader of the Opposition, through his tactics committee, framed the questions. Let me start with the question asked by the member for Fraser, the former—sacked—shadow Treasurer:
My question is to the Treasurer and concerns last week’s government announcements concerning the ethanol excise.

Because in any of these discussions context is important, let me remind the parliament of the announcement that was being referred to. It was an announcement I made only five days earlier to impose an excise on ethanol—previously ethanol had been excise free—because of this impending shipment and because of our concern about the state of the Australian industry. Is the Labor Party railing against the fact that we were concerned about the Australian industry? The Leader of the Opposition talks about a $20 million benefit to a company. Is he really saying that we should not have taken the action to protect the Australian industry and the jobs of Australians?

The press statement that I am referring to is one that I made on 12 September. It was that press statement and that decision which triggered this package of questions. Debate about ethanol and related matters had been going on for some time, but it was this decision of the government to impose the excise on ethanol and to couple that decision with a production subsidy for local producers that triggered this package of questions. That is why the then shadow Treasurer asked the Treasurer a question about Trafigura Fuels, the company importing the ethanol from Brazil. He made it even more specific to that shipment by talking about the impost of a ‘$5 million excise bill on a contract which was excise free when it was signed’. That screams specificity to the Brazilian imports. That is not generally about ethanol. That is very specific to that particular shipment. That is the context in which that question was asked of the Treasurer. Then we have the member for Chisholm, who asked the first question of me. She said:

Mr Crean interjecting—

The SPEAKER—If the Leader of the Opposition wants to stay here to vote, he will watch his counsel.

Mr HOWARD—Once again, that particular question screams specificity in relation to Brazil:

If so, when? Was the government urged to take action to prevent Trafigura Fuels Australia from importing a shipment of ethanol from Brazil at a commercially competitive price?

And what was my answer? It was:

Speaking for myself, I did not personally have any discussions, from recollection, with any of them.

Mr Crean—Any discussions!

The SPEAKER—I warn the Leader of the Opposition!

Mr HOWARD—That was the answer I gave, and that is true. That was true then and it remains true today. I then went on to say, which was self-evidently borne out by subsequent information:

I would be very surprised, in relation to a matter like this, if representations had not been made by all of the interested parties to various levels of the government—in fact, I would be quite amazed.

Of course, there were plenty of representations made by various levels of government.
But of course the crucial thing here is not only context but also dates. I had my meeting with Mr Honan on 1 August. The first the government knew about the Brazilian imports was about 21 August, or perhaps the 22nd or the 23rd—it matters not. There was a lapse of three weeks. Self-evidently, when I met Mr Honan on 1 August we did not talk about the Brazilian imports. We did not talk about—

Mr Crean—That’s right.

Mr Howard—The Leader of the Opposition says, ‘That’s right.’ I might rhetorically inquire why the Leader of the Opposition is moving a censure. The truth is that when we had that meeting we knew absolutely nothing about those Brazilian imports. It was a discussion in which Mr Honan put propositions to me about the ethanol industry—propositions that he had been arguing with ministers, with people in the bureaucracy and, for all I know, with people in the opposition over a long period of time. So that is the question asked by the member for Chisholm.

Then we have another question asked of me by the then shadow Treasurer who asked if I had been able to follow up on the question that had been asked the previous day. I gave an answer which was also in the context of the questions having been asked about the Brazilian imports. Then we have the question asked of me by the Leader of the Opposition. He said:

I refer to the government’s failure to put a cap on ethanol blending ...

He then went on to say that, apparently, at a meeting with the minister for agriculture some comment had been made about my personal attitude to the question of whether there should be a cap on ethanol blending. In reply to the Leader of the Opposition, after dealing with that particular issue, I then returned very deliberately to this issue and said:

This is perhaps a good opportunity, seeing as the company Manildra was mentioned by the Leader of the Opposition, to answer the question that was directed to me yesterday by the member for Fraser. The member for Fraser asked me some questions about communications between Manildra and my office. In the time available, I have had a search made ...

Many of these points have been read out, and I will not weary the House by reading them out again, but I went on in that answer to disclose quite specifically that I had received a letter dated 28 August from Mr Honan about the Brazilian imports. That was the written communication I had had from Mr Honan—and indeed the only communication I had had from Mr Honan—about the Brazilian imports, and I made that public to the House. Any suggestion that I have in some way covered up a discussion with Mr Honan regarding those imports is complete nonsense.

The case against me is that I misled the House because I did not disclose the meeting I had on 1 August, despite the fact that I was asked a question about the conduct of the government regarding some imports from Brazil which were not known to me or to anybody in the government when that meeting took place on 1 August. If that were a case before a police court it would be dismissed with costs because it is a very poor argument and a very poor case. So indeed is the general argument. We all know that this is about the claim that the Liberal Party look after these wealthy companies, despite the fact that since we have been in office we have done more to help the average wage and salary earner in seven years than the Labor Party did in 13 years. As I told the Tasmanian state council of the Liberal Party at the weekend, one of the really proud boasts of this government is that in the seven years
we have been in government we have lifted real wages, whereas in the 13 years that Labor was in government it boasted about suppressing real wages. Far from our lining the pockets of big business, we have set out to help the families of Australia and to help working Australian men and women.

The whole implication of this censure motion is: ‘Here is Howard looking after one of his business mates.’ I am very proud of the fact that the government want to encourage businessmen to invest in Australia’s future. When men and women in business invest, they employ Australians. It is no accident that the unemployment rate now is two per cent lower than it was in March 1996. It is no accident that the youth unemployment rate is lower than it has been at any time since 1990. It is no accident that 1.1 million new jobs have been created in Australia since we came to power. It is no accident that one of the great strengths of this country is its economic growth and economic development over the last seven years. We have done that because we have encouraged and created an entrepreneurial, pro-business climate.

That does not mean that every time a businessman comes through our door we do what they ask. In talking about Manildra we have had this extraordinary pantomime—I might say a rather inadequate, faltering pantomime—from the Leader of the Opposition, not very enthusiastically greeted by his backbench. He says that we are helping Dick Honan. Dick Honan would like to believe that, because there are two things that he has been asking us to do more than anything else. The first is to mandate a minimum use of ethanol and the second is not to impose a 10 per cent cap on ethanol blending of petrol.

Mr HOWARD—Have the government responded to either of those requests? No, the government have not, because we do not think it would be good public policy to respond to either of those requests. That, as much as anything else, illustrates what a pathetic censure motion this is. With all the other public issues around at the present time, the tactics committee of the Australian Labor Party has come up with this little effort that, as I say, would be dismissed in the Waverley police court, with costs, after about 10 minutes.

Mr LATHAM (Werriwa) (3.50 p.m.)—The House has just heard from a Prime Minister who could not lie straight in bed. At a time of record public mistrust and cynicism about politics, the Prime Minister is the main culprit. He is a serial offender.

Mr Abbott—Mr Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I think that was unparliamentary language. Under the standing orders, the member for Werriwa should be asked to withdraw it.

The SPEAKER—To facilitate the debate I ask the member for Werriwa to withdraw that reference.

Mr LATHAM—I will withdraw. The Prime Minister has only one technique in public office, which is to pretend that black is white and white is black and to try to convince the parliament of that. If it does not work, he will do it again and again. The Prime Minister has disgraced the high office of Prime Minister and has set a new low for arrogance, dishonesty and the abuse of parliamentary standards in the House of Representatives. For a man who talks about the importance of traditional institutions and who leads a side of the parliament that talks about traditional institutions, he has done a huge amount of damage to the most important institution of a parliamentary democracy: the truth. The truth has been damaged
time after time. For this Prime Minister, it is always truth overboard.

The funny thing about these incidents is that there is always a boat and the truth goes straight overboard. From the kids overboard scandal, to misleading us about Iraq obtaining uranium from Africa, to his rorted insiders’ deal with Dick Honan and Manildra, the Prime Minister has thrown the truth overboard. He has abandoned the Westminster tradition of honesty in parliament and he has abandoned the basic principle of truth in public life. It started with his distinction between core and non-core promises and then it progressed to stonewalling tactics in the House—never admitting an error, never correcting a mislead, never sacking a minister and always pretending that black is white and white is black.

It started with this interesting notion of core and non-core promises. Now we have a new approach from the Prime Minister today. He is trying to convince us that it is okay, if you are asked a question on a certain day, to give an answer about a question that was asked two days ago—to answer the question about something that was asked two days ago in the context of a different subject. So he started with core and non-core promises, and he is now getting us into present tense answers and non present tense answers. He is getting us into today’s answers and non-today answers. This is a Prime Minister who has invented a new low in parliamentary standards. He is now setting an example to the rest of his frontbench that if you are asked the question today, as he was for example on 19 September, it is all right, from this Prime Minister, to give an answer that was in the context of something that might have been asked two days earlier—in this case, on 17 September. It is an act of fantasy. It is a new low in parliamentary standards and a new low in parliamentary dishonesty.

The Prime Minister has made an art form of defending the indefensible and he has only one rule: if in doubt, pretend that black is white and hope that you get away with it. Today he has been caught red-handed. Let me give the House a chronology of the Prime Minister’s deceit. Let me give the House the reasons why this motion proposed by the Leader of the Opposition must be carried. On 17 September, the Prime Minister was asked questions by the member for Chisholm. There were two parts to the question: firstly, had he been contacted by Manildra before the government’s decision to impose fuel excise on ethanol; and, secondly, was the government urged to take action to prevent a shipment of ethanol from Brazil? The Prime Minister answered:

Speaking for myself, I did not personally have any discussions, from recollection, with any of them.

It is hard to imagine how you can have a discussion with a boat, so one can only conclude that he was giving an answer that related to the first part of the question by the member for Chisholm—that is, the government’s discussion with Manildra about the decision to impose fuel excise on ethanol. The Prime Minister’s alibi—his false alibi—is that he was really talking about the boat. Why didn’t he stand up in the parliament and say that? Why didn’t he give an answer along the lines of ‘sure, I met with Dick Honan to talk about industry assistance, but we didn’t discuss the Brazilian shipment’? Why didn’t the Prime Minister actually give the truth? Why didn’t he give the reality of what happened on 1 August, which the record now shows to be the thing that actually happened? This Prime Minister is living in a fantasy world—a fantasy world where white is black and black is white. He thinks he can get away with anything. He thinks, with this arrogant style of his, that he does not have to be accountable to the House of Representa-
tives and that he can get away with anything by exercising his numbers in this place.

Then on 18 September, the member for Fraser asked about communication between the Prime Minister’s office and Manildra regarding the government’s fuel excise policy for ethanol. The Prime Minister said that he was very happy to look at whether there had been any communication. On that occasion, he was happy to see if there had been any communication on this particular matter. Then the very next day, on 19 September, the Leader of the Opposition asked about ethanol blending and the meeting between the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry and the Petroleum Institute where the minister said that the Prime Minister would not agree to a 10 per cent cap on ethanol on petrol if it damaged Manildra. The Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry was out there blowing the whistle on the fact that this Prime Minister will not do anything to hurt Manildra; in fact, he will be quite prejudicial in the way in which he tries to help them.

Then the Prime Minister takes the opportunity to answer the question by the member for Fraser the previous day. The Prime Minister volunteers the following particular information, which is the key thing:
The member asked me what communication my office had with Manildra relating to the decision to change excise arrangements for the ethanol industry. As I stated earlier, I had not spoken to Dick Honan on this issue.
The issue is not the Brazilian boat. That is not what the Prime Minister said. He made reference to communication his office had had with Manildra relating to the decision to change excise arrangements for the ethanol industry. That is the simple and sole context in which the Prime Minister answered:
As I stated earlier, I had not spoken to Dick Honan on this issue.
That is a clear mislead of the House of Representatives. It is a mislead on 19 September and, where he said he stated this earlier, one assumes a mislead on 17 September. It is a double-banger. It is a double mislead by the Prime Minister on 19 September. Then he goes on to say:
I have, on checking, found that a number of letters were received on this general issue—not just on ethanol but on the general issue. In fact, my office received 16 in all, from different sources, from January until now.
So the Prime Minister is trying to have the House believe that he goes away between 17 and 19 September and finds 16 pieces of correspondence relating to this particular matter, but he cannot find his own department’s written record of the meeting on 1 August. This is completely fantastic. This is completely unbelievable. This is a Prime Minister who is living in a fantasy world who thinks he can get away with anything. Any amount of dishonesty in the House is okay by this Prime Minister, if he thinks he can get away with it. Of course, the opposition will not allow it and that is why the Prime Minister should be condemned in the strongest possible terms.
Of course he has this ridiculous alibi that it is permissible now to talk about the context of a question that was asked two days earlier. What sort of parliamentary standard is that? He is saying it is permissible to talk about the context of something that was asked two days earlier, with no accountability for the thing that was asked on 19 September and the specific answer that was provided by the Prime Minister when he said he had not spoken to Dick Honan on the issue. Clearly the record shows that he has and that this is an open-and-shut case of misleading the parliament.
On the two days between the 17th and the 19th, he went away and found the 16 letters. He wants the House to believe that he could
find the 16 letters but not a copy of the departmental record. He wants the House to believe that he can find the 16 letters, but he cannot find a diary entry in his office that the 1 August meeting ever took place. Has he got a secretary? Has he got a personal assistant? Has the Prime Minister got a diary entry that shows that a meeting with Dick Honan actually took place on 1 August? He could find the 16 letters, but he cannot find any record of the meeting. He cannot find it in the written form, as written up by Susan Murphy on 7 August, and he cannot find any record of the seven departmental officers who had access to this particular document. It is simply unbelievable. It is a Prime Minister pretending that black is white and white is black. Then, having misled on 19 September and having never had this matter drawn to his attention since, there is no answer.

The opposition has asked question after question today and the Prime Minister will not even talk about his answer on 19 September. It is the answer that dare not speak its name. It is the answer that this Prime Minister is afraid to refer to. It is the answer that he is just hoping will disappear out of the parliamentary record. He is probably looking for your assistance, Mr Speaker—just make it disappear out of the parliamentary record. He is expected to give an answer to something that was asked two days earlier.

Mr Abbott—I rise on a point of order, Mr Speaker. I think that the member for Werriwa has just been reflecting on the chair in those comments and I think he should be asked to withdraw.

The SPEAKER—I thank the Leader of the House for his protection. I listened closely to what the member for Werriwa was saying. I thought he was referring to the
questions in the context of something that had been asked two days earlier. It is an absolute nonsense, an absolute debasing of the things that are vital in a functioning parliamentary democracy.

This case is proven but still we need to ask the question: why? Why would the Prime Minister so vigorously defend the indefensible? Why engage in an act of fantasy. Why make a goose of himself in the Australian parliament, as he has done today? Why be so keen to cover up the true nature of his relationship with Honan? The answer is plain. Why has the Prime Minister gone to such lengths to defend the indefensible? Because this is a rort—a $240 million insiders’ deal between the Prime Minister and his mate Dick Honan. That is the truth of it. Australian taxpayers are being asked to fork out $240 million for one company. Forget about an industry; this is a one company industry. This is a company that is going to take the bulk of the $240 million of taxpayers’ money. It is the ultimate insiders’ deal, a deal for the few not for the many, a deal that cannot be defended in terms of good public policy, a deal that confirms the shocking pattern of waste and mismanagement under this government.

We had the Treasurer earlier on talking about fiscal rigour. The truth is that, for someone who has been on a $90 billion spending spree since 1997, fiscal rigour is a foreign land. That is the truth of the Treasurer’s record: fiscal rigour is a foreign land, and this is part of the problem. He laughs at the idea of an insiders’ deal—$240 million of taxpayers’ money for one company and basically for one man, Honan. He thinks that is funny. Well, with a record like his you would laugh. You would laugh at the fiscal extravagance of it all. The truth is that this is $240 million for a company that has been trading profitably and can fund its own expansion. Whatever happened to private enterprise? Whatever happened to competition in the private sector, where if you are making a profit you can fund your own expansion plans? This is a deal for a company where the overseas competitors have been knocked out of the ring, a deal for a company where $240 million is being spent for one company when there is enormous consumer concern about ethanol in petrol.

We had the Prime Minister earlier on trying to blame the Labor Party for any loss of jobs in this industry. The next thing he will be trying to do is blame the small business petrol stations that have big placards in front of their stations saying, ‘We guarantee there is no ethanol in our petrol.’ That is the thing that consumers are worried about. The thing that motoring organisations are worried about is the damage to cars that comes from ethanol. Next thing you know, the Prime Minister will be blaming the small business petrol stations around the country. This is an insiders’ deal. This is a Prime Minister who cannot tell the truth, who will not tell the truth; a Prime Minister who has set a new low for dishonesty and double standards in the House of Representatives. He should be condemned by this parliament in the strongest possible terms. How the Treasurer can stand up and defend this waste and mismanagement of $240 million is unbelievable. (Time expired)

An incident having occurred in the gallery—

The SPEAKER—Order! Before I recognise the Treasurer can I take the liberty of reminding the Leader of the Opposition and the members for Jagajaga, Corio and Rankin that they have been warned. If they wish to vote they will recognise the warning. I call the Treasurer.

Mr COSTELLO (Higgins—Treasurer) (4.06 p.m.)—This is the first day back after a six-week break. The Labor Party has been going to extraordinary lengths with freedom
of information requests, leaking out a little titbit of this story to the newspapers, and it has had six weeks to prepare for today’s censure motion. You have just heard that the member for Werriwa’s six-week preparation consisted of a torrent of abuse, different adjectives that he could string together to try to load an insult, but nothing substantive, no indictment of any policy position. One can say he laboured so greatly and produced such a little result. For the backbench, which of course was supposed to be cheering on this censure motion—‘First day back: censure motion on the Prime Minister’—this would have been an opportunity to really restabilise the Leader of the Opposition with a red hot attack, and of course all of the enthusiasm that we saw coming forth from the opposition shows you how flat this proposition is and how flat this censure is.

I want to begin by picking up on something that the member for Werriwa said as he opened his torrent of abuse. He said, ‘This is a new low in parliamentary standards.’ Mr Speaker, I am afraid it is not. The low in parliamentary standards has been well and truly established by the member for Werriwa. He has established it over recent periods of time and he did it as a deliberate policy. He announced that he would have a policy of muscling up, as he called it, and went about establishing new lows in parliamentary standards, which I have never seen in my time and I defy anybody who has been here longer than I to say they have seen it. It included attacks on Janet Albrechtsen—do you remember the attack and the word that was used in relation to her?—on George Bush, who was called the most incompetent and dangerous President in living memory, and on me, in a manner which had to be expunged from the Hansard it was so bad. It included attacks on the Hon. John Howard. It included material in relation to Tony Abbott, Gerard Henderson, Anne Henderson and the CIS.

There was no precedent for the torrent of abuse and the language that was unleashed as a deliberate policy from the member for Werriwa. If we are going to stand here and listen to somebody complaining about new lows in parliamentary standards, please have somebody other than the member for Werriwa deliver the line. Please have somebody who can deliver it with a straight face. Maybe the shadow Assistant Treasurer might be good at it. But the member for Werriwa on parliamentary standards? We have heard it all!

Secondly, he said that the Prime Minister is pretending white is black and black is white. It was alleged that the Prime Minister was making contradictory statements. Excuse me? This is the member for Werriwa who was quoted in the Australian on Saturday a week ago as saying that Labor is the party of fiscal rectitude and who is complaining that people are making claims that white is black and black is white. This is the member for Werriwa who accused the Prime Minister of a pattern of behaviour; it is the man who unleashed, and told Australia he would be unleashing, a pattern of behaviour to muscle up the Labor Party which involves insult and abuse. By putting the member for Werriwa up on his maiden day out as Manager of Opposition Business, nothing could have more effectively undermined the case. If I did not have to go on for another 10 minutes I would stop it right there. Case proven, Your Honour: the counsel for the prosecution complaining about low parliamentary standards—exhibit A: one member for Werriwa!

Let me now go to what the Leader of the Opposition had to say, because he actually tried to say something seriously and put together a case, although, I must say again, not with much enthusiasm after six weeks. Here is the essence of the case that the Leader of
the Opposition puts. Firstly, he said that there was a secret meeting. Secondly, this secret meeting was so sinister that the Prime Minister felt compelled to mislead the House about it. Thirdly, when he was confronted with this, the Prime Minister falsely justified misleading the House. Fourthly—here comes the evidence and motivation—all of this is leading to a benefit for the Manildra Group. We can demolish these propositions one by one.

The first is the secret meeting. This is such a secret meeting that the PM&C is invited in to document it. This secret meeting is then distributed to Mr Balthwick, Dr Horn, Ms Goddard, Mr Clively, Ms Innes and Ms Harrison. So we call people into this secret meeting, we document it and we send it immediately out to seven people. If anybody knows how the Public Service works, they know the Public Service multiplies pieces of paper like mushrooms. If it goes out to seven people, they all put the next seven people on their distribution list and it exponentially increases. So we have this meeting, the PM&C comes in, we have it minuted, we have seven people put it on the record and it exponentially increases. So we have this meeting, the PM&C comes in, we have it minuted, we have seven people put it on the record and then, of course, the meeting is so secret that it is given out as an FOI request. That is a very secret meeting, isn’t it? It actually details what the discussion was in relation to ethanol. I will come back to that in a moment. Far from this being a secret meeting, it is documented, it is released, it is put out as an FOI and we are actually told what happens at it.

Secondly, the Leader of the Opposition says, ‘He has a secret meeting. This meeting is so sinister that he feels compelled to mislead the parliament about it.’ When you read the answers that the Prime Minister was giving all the way through this, he was making the point that it was perfectly legitimate for Manildra to lobby the government. He said that on every occasion he was asked a question. Would we be surprised that Manildra had tried to lobby the government? I have been a minister for 7½ years and, in my experience, there are probably about 20 million Australians who would lobby the government on particular issues that actually affect them. In fact, it is very hard to say ‘no’ because, in a democracy, they are actually entitled to lobby you. It is not new that somebody would represent an interest to the government. I will come back to what that was in a moment.

What did the Prime Minister say? He said that he would be very surprised in relation to a matter like this if representations are not being made. That is what he said on 17 September. On 18 September he said, ‘It would not surprise me if there had been communications from the company. Why not?’ He said, ‘Of course I know Mr Honan.’ He came back to it on 19 September and said that he found on checking that he had 16 representations in relation to this—some of these dealt with the shipment from Brazil—and he had received a letter from Mr Honan. There was no pattern here to say that some sinister meeting had gone on. The Prime Minister was saying all along that you would expect representations in relation to this matter. Nobody who has been in government would be surprised if representations had not been made in relation to a matter like this. The meeting was not secret; it was not sinister.

The Prime Minister did not mislead the House. The Prime Minister came into this House and indicated that there had been a very active engagement by Manildra in relation to all these issues. What he did not know about was the Trafalgar matter. That is what he did not know about. The reason he did not know about the Trafalgar matter was that nobody knew about the Trafalgar matter on 1 August. There was no attempt to say, ‘I’ve never heard of Dick Honan.’ There was no attempt to say, ‘He would never put a submission to the government.’ In fact, it was quite the reverse. The expectation was that
he most probably would and it turned out
that he had. He had actually sent in a letter,
which was also told to the House. So there
was no secret meeting, there was no sinister
intent in the meeting and there was no mis-
leading of the House.

Now we come to the question of what the
actual demands were that Mr Honan made.
The opposition’s case is this: it was secret
and sinister. Mr Honan was going to get
something that was so sinister the Prime
Minister was not going to tell anybody about
it.

Mr Latham—Well, he did.

Mr COSTELLO—He did, did he? Let us
look at what Mr Honan asked for. He wanted
a mandated ethanol of 10 per cent. Did he
get that? That is what he wanted. Let me tell
you what mandating is. Mandating is when
you pass a law saying petrol has to include,
in this case, 10 per cent of ethanol. If I was
making ethanol, I can imagine that I would
probably want to have mandating too. I can
imagine why you would want that. That is
why he came in; he asked for mandating of
ethanol. Has his request been provided for?
No. Has it been met? No. If you had been in
that meeting and you were Mr Honan, you
probably would have thought, ‘My goodness,
well that’s not going too well.’

Secondly, he wanted retention of excise
exemption for ethanol. Ethanol has always
been excise free in this country—always. It
has never had an excise on it and this side of
politics gave a five-year commitment that we
would not change that situation without giv-
ing five years notice. Do you know when we
gave notice? This year’s budget; we gave
notice in this year’s budget in May that the
clock was ticking down on the five-year ex-
emption. So far from keeping the excise ex-
emption, the fact is the clock started running
in relation to that and is going to run down
until 2008. Was mandating granted? No. Was
ethanol excise exemption kept? Yes, but for
five years in accordance with our election
policy and we have started the countdown in
relation to that.

The third thing he asked for was a pay-
ment of a producer credit to enable Austra-
lian ethanol producers to compete with the
cheaper Brazilian product. Let me tell you
how that came about. That was the coalit-
ion’s policy at the last election—a producer
credit. It was actually published at the last
election, so it was some secret. What you can
interpret that to mean is: will you be imple-
menting what you said at the last election?

Ms Roxon interjecting—

Mr COSTELLO—In an announcement
quite recently, the acting minister for indus-
try announced the way in which the coalition
will be meeting that. So Mr Honan comes in
with a request for mandating. He does not
get it. He comes in and he asks for excise to
continue and he is told, ‘You’ll get your five
years and we’ll start the clock on you.’ He
asks for a producer credit and it has already
been promised.

On the back of those demands you would
have to say, if you are Mr Honan, that it was
not a very good meeting that day on 1 Au-
 gust. You would have to say, on the back of
those demands, who would want to keep the
meeting secret and who would say it was
sinister? Who would? This is where the
whole house of cards starts to fall apart. I
want to go back even further and tell you
how this house of cards started falling apart.
This house of cards started falling apart
when the Australian Labor Party began an
attack on ethanol in this parliament, and they
started asking me the questions. Mr Speaker,
I have to confess to you I was no expert on
ethanol when I was being asked these ques-
tions.

Mr Latham—Nothing’s changed!
Mr COSTELLO—A lot has changed in relation to that. They came up with a person called Andra Turner who allegedly used ethanol. Her engine then seized and she got a $746.90 bill. That was widely publicised in this parliament. I now want to quote an article written by Paul Sheehan in the same newspaper, the Sydney Morning Herald—on 28 April:

A FEW days before Christmas last year, on December 18, this newspaper published a consumer horror story on the front page. It unleashed a barrage of controversy about the dangers of buying cheap petrol, especially petrol with high levels of ethanol. Good story. Pity it wasn’t true.

Ms Roxon interjecting—

Mr COSTELLO—Paul Sheehan went to the mechanic and the mechanic said he had never said, ‘This car had used ethanol.’

Ms Roxon interjecting—

The SPEAKER—I warn the member for Gellibrand!

Mr COSTELLO—The car had broken all right; one problem: it had been using kerosene rather than ethanol. But of course the allegation was made and put on the front page of the Sydney Morning Herald.

In relation to actual tests which this government did, we put a cap on it of 10 per cent because the evidence said that over 10 per cent you could do damage. But if you want to go back to where all of this started, it started with the Australian Labor Party running cases which the Sydney Morning Herald published and which the Sydney Morning Herald has now been forced to admit were not true. All of the other allegations that have been put by the Leader of the Opposition are similarly not true. In relation to the member for Werriwa, similarly not true. On the way through we made one observation: when there is a debate on parliamentary standards in this place, do not send the member for Werriwa in; it is hard enough to keep a straight face anyway. This motion ought to be defeated.

Question put:

That the motion (Mr Crean’s) be agreed to.

The House divided. [4.25 p.m.]

(The Speaker—Mr Neil Andrew)

Ayes.............. 58
Noes.............. 80
Majority......... 22

AYES

Adams, D.G.H. Beazley, K.C.
Byrne, A.M. Cox, D.A.
Crosio, J.A. Edwards, G.J.
Emerson, C.A. Ferguson, L.D.T.
Fitzgibbon, J.A. Gibbons, S.W.
Grierson, S.J. Hall, J.G.
Hoare, K.J. Jackson, S.M.
Kerr, D.J.C. Latham, M.W.
Livermore, K.F. McEwen, R.B.
McLeay, L.B. Mossfield, F.W.
O’Byrne, M.A. O’Connor, G.M.
Price, L.R.S. Ripoll, B.F.
Sawford, R.W. Smith, S.F.
Swan, W.M. Thomson, K.J.
Wilkie, K. Albanese, A.N.
Bevis, A.R. Corcoran, A.K.
Crean, S.F. Danby, M. *
Ellis, A.L. Evans, M.J.
Ferguson, M.J. George, J.
Gillard, J.E. Griffin, A.P.
Hatton, M.J. Irwin, J.
Jenkins, H.A. King, C.F.
Lawrence, C.M. Macklin, J.L.
McFarlane, J.S. Melham, D.
Murphy, J. P. O’Connor, B.P.
Plibersek, T. Quick, H.V. *
Roxon, N.L. Sidebottom, P.S.
Snowdon, W.E. Tanner, L.
Vanvakainou, M. Zahra, C.J.

NOES

Abbott, A.J. Andrews, K.J.
Bailey, F.E. Baldwin, R.C.
Bartlett, K.J. Bishop, B.K.
Brough, M.T. Anderson, J.D.
Anthony, L.J. Baird, B.G.
Barresi, P.A. Billson, B.F.
Bishop, J.J. Cadman, A.G.
Cameron, R.A.  
Charles, R.E.  
Cobb, J.K.  
Downer, A.J.G.  
Dutton, P.C.  
Entsch, W.G.  
Gallus, C.A.  
Gash, J.  
Haase, B.W.  
Hartsuyker, L.  
Hockey, J.B.  
Hull, K.E.  
Johnson, M.A.  
Katter, R.C.  
Kelly, J.M.  
King, P.E.  
Lindsay, P.J.  
May, M.A.  
McGauran, P.J.  
Nairn, G. R.  
Neville, P.C.  
Pearce, C.J.  
Pyne, C.  
Ruddock, P.M.  
Scott, B.C.  
Slipper, P.N.  
Somlyay, A.M.  
Stone, S.N.  
Ticehurst, K.V.  
Truss, W.E.  
Vaile, M.A.J.  
Wakelin, B.H.  
Williams, D.R.  
Causley, J.R.  
Ciobo, S.M.  
Costello, P.H.  
Draper, P.  
Elsom, K.S.  
Farmer, P.F.  
Gambaro, T.  
Georgiou, P.  
Hardgrave, G.D.  
Hawker, D.P.M.  
Howard, J.W.  
Hunt, G.A.  
Jull, D.F.  
Kelly, D.M.  
Kemp, D.A.  
Ley, S.P.  
Lloyd, J.E.  
Moylan, J. E.  
Nelson, B.J.  
Panopoulos, S.  
Prosser, G.D.  
Randel, D.J.  
Schultz, A.  
Seeker, P.D.  
Smith, A.D.H.  
Southcott, A.J.  
Thompson, C.P.  
Tollner, D.W.  
Tuckey, C.W.  
Vale, D.S.  
Washer, M.J.  
Worth, P.M.  

* denotes teller

Question negatived.

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

PERSONAL EXPLANATIONS

Mr MURPHY (Lowe) (4.32 p.m.)—Mr Speaker, I wish to make a personal explanation.

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

Mr MURPHY—I do.

The SPEAKER—Please proceed.

Mr MURPHY—Today on crikey.com there is a shoddy little piece in relation to my position on a second airport for the people of Sydney. To facilitate the House, I will quickly point out a number of errors in it.

The SPEAKER—The member for Lowe must indicate where he has been misrepresented.

Mr MURPHY—Yes. It says:

John Murphy’s stance was widely reported in the media but none of the reporters seemed to have questioned why.

That is incorrect. It goes on and says:

The answer is quite simple. John Murphy is currently the parliamentary secretary to the Leader of the Opposition, Simon Crean, so of course Murphy supported the decision of his own boss.

I supported it because on any environmental angle a second airport outside the Sydney basin is preferable to one at Badgerys Creek.

The SPEAKER—The member for Lowe is now advancing an argument. He should resume his seat.

QUESTIONS TO THE SPEAKER

Questions on Notice

Mr MURPHY (4.33 p.m.)—Mr Speaker, I would like a bit of help understanding order 150. On 28 August last year question No. 876—

Mr Sidebottom—are you going to get to Colston?

Mr MURPHY—We will get to Colston. Question No. 876 to the Prime Minister first appeared on the Notice Paper on 28 August, as did question No. 878 to the Treasurer. On 12 December 2002, question No. 1255 to the Minister representing the Minister for Revenue and Assistant Treasurer first appeared on the Notice Paper, as did questions Nos 1346 and 1347 to the Minister representing the Minister for Revenue and Assistant Treasurer on 4 February this year. On 5 February, question No. 1356 to the Treasurer first appeared on the Notice Paper. On 10 February, ques-
tion No. 1433 to the Treasurer first appeared on the Notice Paper, as did questions Nos 1457 and 1458 to the Treasurer on 12 February. On 3 March 2003, questions Nos 1545, 1547, 1548, 1549 and 1550 to the Treasurer first appeared on the Notice Paper, as did question No. 1552 to the Attorney-General. On 5 March, question No. 1571 to the Minister representing the Minister for Revenue and Assistant Treasurer and question No. 1572 to the Treasurer first appeared on the Notice Paper. On 6 March, questions Nos 1587, 1588, 1589, 1590, 1592, 1593 and 1594 to the Treasurer first appeared on the Notice Paper, as did questions Nos 1640 and 1641 to the Treasurer on 18 March.

On 19 March, questions Nos 1651 and 1653 to the Treasurer first appeared on the Notice Paper, as did question No. 1761 to the Treasurer on 26 March. On 14 May 2003, question No. 1837 to the Treasurer first appeared on the Notice Paper, as did a series of 10 questions to the Attorney-General, from question No. 1839 through to question No. 1848, which all related to former Senator Colston. Questions Nos 1852 to the Treasurer, 1853 and 1858 to the Minister for Transport and Regional Services also first appeared on the Notice Paper on that date. On 15 March questions Nos 1884, 1885 and 1886 to the Treasurer first appeared on the Notice Paper, as did questions Nos 1896 and 1897 to the Treasurer on 26 May. On 28 May, question No. 1947 to the Minister for Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs first appeared on the Notice Paper, as did questions Nos 1948 and 1950 to the Treasurer and question No. 1949 to the Attorney General. On 29 May, question No. 1964 to the Prime Minister and question No. 1966 to the Minister for Transport and Regional Services first appeared on the Notice Paper.

On 3 June, question No. 1991 to the Attorney-General about Dr Colston first appeared on the Notice Paper, as did also, finally, question No. 1992 to the Minister for Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs. As you know, Mr Speaker, they have been on the Notice Paper for more than 60 days and I would appreciate your help in rounding up those indolent and recalcitrant ministers and the Prime Minister.

The SPEAKER—I thank the member for Lowe for his facilitation. I will follow up the matters as standing order 150 provides.

Questions on Notice

Mr LATHAM (4.37 p.m.)—It is quite a blight on the parliament that one member could have so many questions on notice unanswered outside standing order 150. I seem to recall that the standing order makes provision for you to write as Speaker to ministers. Do you ever get any responses?

The SPEAKER—I indicate to the member for Werriwa that of course I write as requested by members and that there is no obligation on ministers to respond. Not all ministers respond; some ministers do. Recognising that this is an initiative taken by former Speakers, I note that this is a considerably better position than the House once found itself in, where questions were left unanswered without any provision for follow-up.

PERSONAL EXPLANATIONS

Dr NELSON (Bradfield—Minister for Education, Science and Training) (4.38 p.m.)—I seek leave to present a two-page letter and make a short statement.

The SPEAKER—Is leave granted?

Mr Latham—This is an unusual circumstance. Has the shadow minister for education, the member for Jagajaga, been notified of this statement after question time? In the normal course of events, she would be able to make a response. My impression is that she was unaware when she left the chamber—
The SPEAKER—I understand the question, but I point out that the minister has not indicated whether he is making a statement in his role as a member representing an electorate or as the minister, and in that sense that provision is of course only a courtesy should he be making a statement as the minister. Leave is granted.

Mr Latham—Leave has not been granted, and he does not need leave if he has been misrepresented as an individual member of the House.

Dr NELSON—Mr Speaker, in that case I wish to make a personal explanation.

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

Dr NELSON—I do.

The SPEAKER—Please proceed.

Dr NELSON—The Sydney Morning Herald today imputes that I or my office has withheld and/or amended reports produced within my department in relation to reports that have been examining, in particular, the impact of HECS on student participation in higher education. By way of clarifying these issues and explaining why I have in fact been misrepresented, I table a letter dated 8 August 2003 which sets out all of these issues from the Secretary of the Commonwealth Department of Education, Science and Training.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Mr ANTHONY (Richmond—Minister for Children and Youth Affairs) (4.41 p.m.)—I move:

That leave of absence from 11 to 21 August 2003 be given to Mr I. E. Macfarlane (Minister for Industry, Tourism and Resources) on the ground of ill health.

Question agreed to.

PETITIONS

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

Immigration: Asylum Seekers

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

Whereas the 1998 Synod of the Anglican Diocese of Melbourne carried without dissent the following motion:

‘That this Synod regrets the Government’s adoption of procedures for certain people seeking political asylum in Australia which exclude them from all public income support while withholding permission to work, thereby creating a group of beggars dependent on the Churches and charities for food and the necessities of life;

and calls upon the Federal government to review such procedures immediately and remove all practices which are manifestly inhumane and in some cases in contravention of our national obligations as a signatory of the UN Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.’

We, therefore, the individual, undersigned attendees at St Matthew’s, Cheltenham 3192, petition the House of Representatives in support of the above mentioned Motion.

AND we, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

by Ms Corcoran (from 17 citizens)

Immigration: Asylum Seekers

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

Whereas the 1998 Synod of the Anglican Diocese of Melbourne carried without dissent the following motion:

‘That this Synod regrets the Government’s adoption of procedures for certain people seeking political asylum in Australia which exclude them from all public income support while withholding permission to work, thereby creating a group of beggars dependent on the Churches and charities for food and the necessities of life;

and calls upon the Federal government to review such procedures immediately and remove all practices which are manifestly inhumane and in some cases in contravention of our national obli-
gations as a signatory of the UN Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.’

We, therefore, the individual, undersigned attendees at the Surrey Hills Uniting Church, Victoria 3127, petition the House of Representatives in support of the above mentioned Motion.

AND we, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

by Mr Georgiou (from 8 citizens)

Immigration: Asylum Seekers

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

Whereas the 1998 Synod of the Anglican Diocese of Melbourne carried without dissent the following motion:

‘That this Synod regrets the Government’s adoption of procedures for certain people seeking political asylum in Australia which exclude them from all public income support while withholding permission to work, thereby creating a group of beggars dependent on the Churches and charities for food and the necessities of life;

and calls upon the Federal government to review such procedures immediately and remove all practices which are manifestly inhumane and in some cases in contravention of our national obligations as a signatory of the UN Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.’

We, therefore, the individual, undersigned attendees at the Uniting Church Fellowship, Mt Martha, petition the House of Representatives in support of the above mentioned Motion.

AND we, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

by Mr Hunt (from 9 citizens)

Immigration: Asylum Seekers

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

Whereas the 1998 Synod of the Anglican Diocese of Melbourne carried without dissent the following motion:

‘That this Synod regrets the Government’s adoption of procedures for certain people seeking political asylum in Australia which exclude them from all public income support while withholding permission to work, thereby creating a group of beggars dependent on the Churches and charities for food and the necessities of life;

and calls upon the Federal government to review such procedures immediately and remove all practices which are manifestly inhumane and in some cases in contravention of our national obligations as a signatory of the UN Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.’

We, therefore, the individual, undersigned attendees at the Kardinya Uniting Church, Kardinya WA 6163, petition the House of Representatives in support of the above mentioned Motion.

AND we, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

by Dr Lawrence (from 8 citizens)

Medicare: Bulk-Billing

to the Honourable the Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives assembled in parliament:

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

• That under proposed changes to Medicare, families earning more than $32,300 a year will miss out on bulk billing, and doctors will increase their fees for visits that are no longer bulk billed;
• That the rate of bulk billing by GPs has plummeted by 11% under John Howard;
• That’s more than 10 million fewer GP visits were bulk billed this year compared to when John Howard came to office;
• That the average out-of-pocket cost to see a GP who does not bulk bill has gone up by 55% since 1996 to $12.78 today;
• That public hospitals are now under greater pressure because people are finding it harder to see bulk billing doctors.

We therefore pray that the House takes urgent steps to restore bulk billing by general practitioners and reject John Howard’s plan to end universal bulk billing so all Australians have access to the health care they need and deserve.

by Mr Albanese (from 50 citizens)

Medicare: Bulk-Billing

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

The petition of certain citizens of Australia draws to the attention of the House:
• That under proposed changes to Medicare, families earning more than $32,300 a year will miss out on bulk billing, and doctors will increase their fees for visits that are no longer bulk billed;
• The need to keep bulk-billing for the young families and communities of South Australia.

We therefore pray that the House takes urgent steps to restore bulk billing by general practitioners and reject John Howard’s plan to end universal bulk billing so all Australians have access to the health care they need and deserve.

by Mr Martyn Evans (from 88 citizens)

Medicare: Bulk-Billing

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

The petition of certain citizens of Australia draws to the attention of the House:
• That under proposed changes to Medicare, families earning more than $32,300 a year will miss out on bulk billing, and doctors will increase their fees for visits that are no longer bulk billed;
• The need to keep bulk-billing for the young families and communities of Adelaide’s Northern Suburbs.

We therefore pray that the House takes urgent steps to restore bulk billing by general practitioners and reject John Howard’s plan to end universal bulk billing so all Australians have access to the health care they need and deserve.

by Mr Martyn Evans (from 212 citizens)

Medicare: Bulk-Billing

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

The petition of certain citizens of Australia draws to the attention of the House that:
Under the Howard Government the rate of bulk billing has dropped and the cost of visiting a doctor has risen.

We request that the House takes urgent steps to restore bulk billing by General Practitioners and reject John Howard’s plan to end universal bulk billing.

by Mr Jenkins (from 3,596 citizens)

Telstra: Privatisation

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

The petition of certain citizens of Australia draws the following issues to the attention of the House:
• The Howard Government is determined to sell Telstra even though submissions to its own inquiry, the Estens Inquiry, overwhelmingly show that services are still inadequate.
• These submissions also reflect widespread concern that services will decline further if the rest of Telstra is sold.
• The Greens, Democrats and Independents may make deals with the Liberal government to allow the sale to go ahead, despite increasing community opposition to the sale.
• A fully privatised Telstra will focus on profits not people; shareholders will be more important than customers.
• Services will suffer under a fully privatised Telstra, particularly in outer metropolitan, rural and regional Australia.

We therefore pray that the House oppose the Liberal/National plan to sell Telstra and that all Greens, Democrats and Independents join Labor in opposing the sale of Telstra.

by Mr Albanese (from 39 citizens)
by Ms Jackson (from 35 citizens)

Telstra: Privatisation

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

These petitioners of the Division of Shortland and adjoining areas are deeply concerned at any plans to further privatisate Telstra.

Further privatisation of Telstra will result in the loss of thousands more Telstra jobs, worsening services to regional and rural Australia, and the loss of up to $1 billion a year for all Australians earned from Telstra profits.

We believe these profits, both now and in the future, should be set aside to secure improved educational opportunities for our children, increased research and development funds for our scientists and doctors, and more money for rural and regional Australia.

Your petitioners therefore respectfully request that the House reject any further sale of the Commonwealth’s shares in Telstra and that the annual profits from Telstra be used for the benefit of all Australians.

by Ms Hall (from 14 citizens).

Medicare: Bulk-Billing

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

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

• That the biggest ever drop in GP bulk billing since the introduction of Medicare occurred in the last 12 months;
• That the rate of bulk billing by GPs has been in serious decline and has fallen by almost 6.7% since 1996;
• That the average cost to see a GP who does not bulk bill has gone up from $8.32 in 1996 to $11.98 today- an increase of 44%;
• That unless the rate of bulk billing by GPs is increased, a greater burden will fall on our public hospitals to treat Australians who cannot afford a visit to the doctor.

Your petitioners therefore request the House take steps to ensure that all Australians can access bulk billing.

by Mr Beazley (from 718 citizens)
by Ms Jackson (from 57 citizens)

Medicare: Bulk-Billing

To the Honourable the Speaker and members of the House of Representatives assembled in parliament:

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

• That the rate of bulk billing by GPs has fallen by over 15% in Shortland Electorate since 2000 and is now in serious decline;
• That this year, 7.7 million fewer GP visits were bulk billed than in 1996;
• That the average out-of-pocket cost to see a GP who does not bulk bill has gone up by 51% since 1996;
• That public hospitals are now under greater pressure because people are finding it harder to see bulk billing doctors.

We therefore pray that the House takes urgent steps to restore bulk billing by general practitioners so that all Australians have access to the health care they need.

by Ms Hall (from 234 citizens)

Medicare: Bulk-Billing

To the Honourable the Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives assembled in parliament:
The petition of certain citizens of Australia draws to the attention of the House:

- That the rate of bulk billing by GPs has fallen by over 10% since 1996 and is now in serious decline;
- That this year, 7.7 million fewer GP visits were bulk billed than in 1996;
- That the average out-of-pocket cost to see a GP who does not bulk bill has gone up by 51% since 1996 to $12.57 today.
- That public hospitals are now under greater pressure because people are finding it harder to see bulk billing doctors.

We therefore pray that the House takes urgent steps to restore bulk billing by general practitioners so that all Australians have access to the health care they need.

by Mr Stephen Smith (from 538 citizens)

Human Rights: Falun Dafa

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

The petition of certain citizens and residents of Australia draws to the attention of the House the persecution Falun Dafa in China.

Falun Dafa is a peaceful spiritual practice with over 100 million adherents in over 40 countries. In July 1999 the Chinese Central Government launched a propaganda campaign against Falun Dafa and declared the movement to be illegal. Tens of thousands of practitioners have been imprisoned without trial, while 159 have been tortured to death. This crackdown is clearly a breach of fundamental human rights.

Your petitioners therefore pray that the House urge China's leadership to immediately:

1. Lift the ban on Falun Dafa and restore its legal status.
2. Withdraw the warrant of arrest for Mr Li Hongzhi, founder of Falun Dafa.
3. Cease the torture of all detained Falun Dafa practitioners and release them forthwith.
4. Guarantee the full civil rights of released practitioners and their relatives.
5. Rectify all false propaganda used to defame Falun Dafa.

We further request that the Australian government issue a clear statement supporting the right of Falun Dafa practitioners to freely exercise their beliefs, and condemning the aforementioned abuses of human rights.

by Mr Albanese (from 4,385 citizens)

Defence Properties: Sale or Disposal

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

The petition of certain residents of, and visitors to, Port Stephens draws to the attention of the House the sale by tender of surplus Defence land, known as Gan Gan Army Camp, on the Tomaree Peninsula, Port Stephens, in the State of New South Wales.

Your petitioners therefore ask the House to instruct the Minister for Defence to suspend the sale forthwith. The House is further asked to instruct the Minister for Defence to arrange for this land to be returned to the New South Wales Government for inclusion in the Tomaree National Park for community use and the protection of a rare and diminishing environment.

by Mr Baldwin (from 2,138 citizens)

Defence Properties: Sale or Disposal

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

The Petition of certain citizens of Australia draws to the attention of the House:

That the Commonwealth’s commitment to transfer the Artillery Barracks, Fremantle heritage precinct to the State of WA includes the payment to the WA State Government of commercial rent for the main barracks buildings for ten years with an option for a further ten years. This is to ensure that the Army Museum of Western Australia can remain housed at Artillery Barracks.

Your petitioners therefore request the House to ensure that the Commonwealth Government fully honours its commitment to pay commercial rates as part of the transfer process.

by Mr Edwards (from 139 citizens)

Australia Post: Services

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

We the undersigned, concerned citizens of Australia, draw to the attention of the House the current lack of a full postal service in the Blue Gum Hills
corridor in which the Maryland Shopping Centre is located, serving the suburbs of Maryland and Fletcher with a population of 15,000 plus. Our nearest full postal facility at Wallsend has been inadequate for some time with constant long queues. Further, the Blue Gum Hills corridor is geographically isolated; Public transport is only hourly, giving a three hour turnaround due to frequent long waits at the post office.

Your petitioners therefore request urgent attention from the House to review the current situation to ensure that the residents of this area have a quality full postal facility within their locality.

by Ms Grierson (from 291 citizens)

Immigration: Asylum Seekers

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

This petition by the members of the Boolaroo/Innersy Bay Parish aims to draw the attention of the House to the fact that our City of Lake Macquarie has been declared a Welcome Zone for refugees and asylum seekers. We are one of 31 such Welcome Zones in Australia and vice have been appealing to the Minister for Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs to release those asylum seekers, many of whom have been held in detention for several years, into our community, where the citizens of Lake Macquarie have expressed their willingness to provide for all their needs. Mr Ruddock has not responded to our appeals and those detainees we have been corresponding with express agony and trauma at the long and apparently hopeless period of incarceration they are experiencing. This is supposed to be a compassionate Christian country but our reputation amongst overseas people is increasingly contrary to this. The policy of detention for long periods is recognized as existing to deter asylum seekers from responding to the persuasion of people smugglers, but it is immoral to make people who have already suffered trauma in the culture they have left, to suffer more trauma in Australia as a deterrent to those who are exploiting them.

Your petitioners therefore request the House as a matter of urgency to enact legislation restoring the right of all asylum seekers to be assessed rapidly and released into the care of the Australian community.

by Ms Hall (from 63 citizens)

Goods and Services Tax: Funerals

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

The petition of certain citizens of Australia draws to the attention of the House that a majority of Australians voted against the introduction of a Goods and Services Tax (GST). We believe a GST on funerals and all associated services is an unfair tax on death.

Your petitioners strongly request the removal of a GST on funerals and associated services.

by Ms Hall (from 21 citizens)

Republic: Plebiscite

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

This petition of certain citizens of Australia draws to the attention of the House the growing desire for Australia to become a republic.

Your petitioners therefore call on the House to conduct a plebiscite asking the Australian people if Australia should become a republic with an Australian citizen as Head of State in place of the Queen.

by Ms Hall (from 4 citizens)

Food Labelling

To the Honourable the Speaker and members of the House of Representatives assembled in parliament:

The undersigned citizens and residents of Australia call on you to:

• Label all Genetically Engineered foods that may be approved for sale;
• Ensure pies contain meat and jam contains fruit;
• Make food labels reflect the true nature of the contents;
• Ensure that the Australia New Zealand Food Authority (ANZFA)—the food safety watchdog—is adequately resourced to protect our food.

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

by Ms Hall (from 17 citizens)
Landcare: Government Support
To the Honourable Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives assembled in Parliament.

The petition of certain residents of the State of New South Wales draws to the attention of the House the apparent lack of support for Landcare and Landcare support staff in NSW. Contracts for Landcare support staff (community capacity building (CCB)) finish on 30th June. CCB is recognised at all levels of government as essential for community involvement in Natural Resource Management. There are no known current arrangements to continue to support Landcare and Landcare support staff from June 2003.

Your petitioners therefore request the House to provide support for Landcare and Landcare support staff through provision of funding for continuation of the Landcare program in NSW for the next 6 months until Blueprint implementation begins.

by Mr Hartsuyker (from 352 citizens)

Constitutional Reform: Powers of the Senate
To the Honourable Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives assembled in Parliament;

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

• That the constitution establishes a means to resolve deadlocks between the Houses of Parliament.
• That where the Senate has twice failed to pass a bill, section 57 of the constitution permits a double dissolution of Parliament whereby all members of both houses must stand for re-election.
• That if after the election the Senate again refuses to pass the bill a joint sitting of both houses maybe held.
• That under proposals made by the Prime Minister, Mr John Howard, it will no longer be necessary to hold a double dissolution election for both houses of federal parliament before being able to hold a joint sitting of Parliament to pass contentious legislation.

We therefore pray that the House takes urgent steps: to consider the opinions of a majority of the Australian populace that the Senate holds the correct amount of power; to accept that the Senate is a genuine house of review; and to reject Mr Howard’s proposal that it will no longer be necessary to hold a double dissolution election for both houses of federal parliament before being able to hold a joint sitting of Parliament to pass contentious legislation.

by Ms Hoare (from 19 citizens)

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

The petition of certain citizens of Australia, and, in particular, Electors of the Federal Division of Cowper, draw to the attention of the House the precipitate commitment of our Australian troops to the Middle East.

Your Petitioners therefore request that the House call on the Australian Government to abide by the view of the vast majority of the Australian people not to engage in a war with Iraq and that the Prime Minister withdraw our troops from the Middle East immediately.

That we request, by way of our UN representative, that the United Nations urgently reconsider stringent (containment and continuing strong sanctions against Iraq as a peaceful means of controlling Saddam Hussein and his weapons of mass destruction and installing democracy.

That, as a matter of extreme urgency, this motion be forwarded to the UN, including the United Nations Security Council, the President of the USA and the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom.

by Mr Hartsuyker (from 45 citizens)

Medicare Office: Cardiff
To the Honourable Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives assembled in Parliament.

The petition of certain citizens of Australia draws to the attention of the House the lack of an accessible Medicare office or agency to Cardiff in the Newcastle region. This situation disadvantages aged pensioners, low-income earners and the unemployed in particular.
Your petitioners therefore ask the House to establish a Medicare office or agency at Cardiff.

by Ms Hoare (from 39 citizens)

Medicare: Bulk-Billing

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

The petition of certain citizens of Australia draws to the attention of the House the lack of bulk billing general practitioners in the Newcastle and Lake Macquarie region. This situation disadvantages aged pensioners, low-income earners and the unemployed who cannot afford an upfront payment for medical services.

Your petitioners therefore ask the House to increase the Medicare rebate for doctors’ services and provide other incentives to encourage general practitioners to bulk bill.

by Ms Hoare (from 38 citizens)

Immigration: Asylum Seekers

To the Honourable Speaker and members of the House of Representatives assembled in parliament:

This petition of certain citizens of Australia draws the attention of the House to the current situation of The East Timorese asylum seekers currently in Australia. We request that a special visa class be introduced to enable this group of long-term asylum seekers to be granted permanent residence.

Your petitioners therefore request that the House turns its urgent attention to addressing this injustice and create a new humanitarian visa class for the East Timorese people living in Australia.

by Ms Hoare (from 100 citizens).

Health: Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme

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

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

• That increases to the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme in the 2002 budget will hit those that can least afford it, families and pensioners.
• That this Government should remember the commitments made before the 2001 election in regard to the cost of prescription drugs.

We therefore pray that the House oppose the Howard-Costello plan to increase the cost of prescription drugs for Australians.

by Ms Jackson (from 18 citizens)

Medicare Office: Lalor/Thomastown/Epping

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

The petition of certain residents of the State of Victoria, draws to the attention of the House, the lack of a Medicare office in Lalor/Thomastown/Epping is seriously inconveniencing the residents;

Your petitioners therefore request the House insist that the Government immediately agree to establish a Medicare Office in Lalor/Thomastown/Epping.

by Mr Jenkins (from 29 citizens)

Telecommunications: Mobile Phone Base Station

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

This petition of certain citizens of Australia draws to the attention of the House the threat to the public interest and health from the failure of the Telecommunications Code of Practice 1997 to include a requirement for all telecommunications carriers to properly notify nearby residents and small businesses of the installation of the proposed mobile phone base station at 97 Majors Bay Road, Concord NSW.

We believe the Government should protect residential and commercial areas across Australia from exposure to electromagnetic radiation (EMR) generated by mobile phone towers installed without adequate community consultation.

We believe the description of the proposed base station at 97 Majors Bay Road, Concord NSW as described by Connell Wagner Pty Limited (A.B.N. 54 005 139 873) on behalf of their client Optus, is insufficient to describe whether the station falls within the definition of ‘low impact facility’ within the meaning of the Telecommunications (Low Impact Facilities) Determination 1997.

We believe Optus can place no reliance on the said Determination in seeking to construct the base station. We say that there is no evidence that...
the proposed base station complies with the Determination.

Your petitioners therefore respectfully request that the House protect public interest and health and that activity to construct the said base station be halted until it is established the base station poses no risk of harm to the public or otherwise breaches the Determination.

by Mr Murphy (from 1,089 citizens)

Health Funding
To the Honourable Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives assembled in parliament;
The Petition of certain residents of the State of Western Australia points out to the House:
The Federal Howard Government is refusing to give us our fair share of funding for the state health system in Western Australia.
We the undersigned believe that health is the most important priority for Government. We applaud the Gallop State Government for providing record levels of funding and increasing spending on health for the last two years.
However the Federal Government spends less on health per person in WA than in any other state.
At the same time they are ripping the heart out of Medicare, forcing more people to use state-funded hospital emergency departments.
We therefore call on the House to urge the Federal Howard Government to match the State’s commitment to health and revise their new funding offer so that it keeps pace with the costs of running our health system.

by Mr Stephen Smith (from 30 citizens)

Immigration: Detention Centres
To the Honorable the Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives assembled in Parliament.
The petition of certain citizens of Australia draws to the attention of the House that we are disturbed by our Governments treatment of people in detention centres. We believe these people to be dispossessed of a safe homeland and traumatized by the circumstances of their perilous journey to find a new home. Further, we believe that it is taking an inordinate amount of time to process applications for refugee status.
Your Petitioners therefore pray that the House be compassionate, just, open and generous in its treatment of detainees and remember that our country has been built on welcoming people in crisis from other lands.

by Dr Stone (from 111 citizens)

Petitions received.

PRIVATE MEMBERS’ BUSINESS
Dental Health
Ms GEORGE (Throsby) (4.45 p.m.)—I move:

That this House:
(1) notes that people from poorer socio-economic backgrounds commonly experience barriers to accessing dental health care;
(2) recognises the adverse impact of the abolition of the Commonwealth Dental Health Program on people who cannot afford private dental care;
(3) recognises that poor dental health has implications for other medical conditions such as heart disease, diabetes, arthritis, respiratory disease and cancer; and
(4) recognises that dental health is a matter that warrants the intervention of the Federal Government.

As a result of my involvement with the Illawarra Dental Health Action Group, I have been moved to bring this important national issue to the attention of our parliament. I believe we are in the grip of a national crisis as far as the provision of public dental health services is concerned. It is a crisis that the Howard government will not acknowledge nor take any action to remedy. It is a crisis because, as the Australian Council of Social Service, ACOSS, has recently pointed out, there are 500,000 people across Australia currently on waiting lists for public dental treatment. It is a crisis because at least half a million of our fellow citizens cannot afford to pay for private treatment and are forgotten and left languishing on waiting lists in all states and territories. Hardest hit, of course, are low-income families, pensioners and disadvantaged groups, including many people
in rural areas. It is a crisis because preventive public dental treatment is nonexistent in Australia. It is a crisis because people are waiting years to get basic treatment, such as having a tooth filled, and often waiting between five and seven years for dentures.

Our local media in the Illawarra recently highlighted the plight of a couple of local citizens, and I want to make reference to them. Rose Attwood from Austinmer had to wait almost a month to receive treatment for a painful infection associated with an abscessed tooth. Fuschia D’Abreu from Berkeley has been waiting on a list for more than five years to have a tooth filled. Back in November 1997, she was told in a form letter that delays were ‘extensive’. Five years on, her tooth has crumbled and there is little left to be filled. Marge Howard, a war widow in Port Kembla and a constituent of mine, wrote recently to me about the plight of her son. I have her permission to quote from her letter. She wrote:

For the past five years I have been caring for my son who is 43 years old. He has been type 1 Diabetic for 20 years, lost 35 kilos in that time, mainly because he can only eat soft food, having 11 teeth in the bottom and 9 on top. He has attended the Dental clinic at Port Kembla hospital at times when suffering from toothache, his teeth break so easily from sugar. They have taken the odd tooth out at times and about 4 years ago, said he would have to attend Shellharbour Hospital and have the rest out. He was to get dentures after that …

Marge Howard’s son is like hundreds of thousands of other Australians languishing on waiting lists for essential dental treatment. This is Australia I am talking about, not a Third World country. This situation is both intolerable and totally unacceptable.

The crisis in public dental care was exacerbated by the heartless decision made by the Howard government in its first budget back in 1997 to scrap Labor’s Commonwealth Dental Health Program. It was a heartless decision that profoundly affected the poorest people in our community. The decision to axe that program cannot even be defended on financial grounds, for—as we know—investing in public dental services now will save money in the longer term. There is increasing evidence that poor oral health is associated with many illnesses, including diabetes, cancer and cardiovascular disease, and with pre-term, low birth weight babies. Yet this government has washed its hands of this national crisis. It does not even recognise that this crisis exists. I was shocked and appalled by a recent statement made by the Minister for Health and Ageing, who argued on a national TV program:

The Commonwealth and the States have various responsibilities … public dental health services are the responsibility of the States … we don’t deliver direct dental health programs.

They are direct quotes from the federal minister, Kay Patterson. This crisis will not go away. The electorate will not let it go away, and it is an issue that must be addressed seriously by the federal Howard government.

Recently I circulated a petition with the assistance of the Illawarra Dental Health Action Group. This petition was signed by 1,895 constituents who support the reintroduction of a Commonwealth funded dental program. It is my intention to formally present this petition to the parliament. The call in this petition for the reintroduction of a Commonwealth funded dental program was supported in a recent survey of constituents in my electorate of Throsby. In response to the question about dental health care needs, there was an overwhelming 90 per cent response in support of the reintroduction of a Commonwealth funded dental program.

I commend the concern, commitment and voluntary effort of members of the Illawarra Dental Health Action Group, many of whom
have travelled by bus to hear this debate in parliament. I commend their efforts, for they have largely driven the debate onto the national agenda and made it an issue of national concern and significance. Those of us in parliament who watched the recent coverage of this issue on the national *A Current Affair* program, and the comments made by Ray Martin and others on that program, have the efforts of this group to thank for that.

I know that the people involved in my group locally and in many similar community groups across the length and breadth of Australia will not let up on their efforts until such time as this public crisis is acknowledged and this government commits to the reintroduction of a Commonwealth funded dental health program. I want to conclude by quoting the sentiments expressed in the petition. The petitioners are asking this parliament to recognise, firstly, ‘that people from poorer socio-economic backgrounds commonly experience barriers to accessing dental health care’ and, secondly, ‘the adverse impact of the abolition of the Commonwealth Dental Health Program on people who cannot afford private dental care’. The ACOSS figures show quite clearly that waiting lists are growing. People are being denied treatment, even in emergency situations. Locally, we are told that unless your gums are bleeding and you are in intense pain you cannot necessarily be seen that day. People have to wait days and weeks, even when they have an abscessed tooth and are running the risk of high levels of fever and infection.

We need to recognise that public investment in public dental health services is an investment well made, because there is a growing body of evidence that says that good oral health is an essential precondition for overall health and wellbeing. The failure to have good oral health is linked to heart disease, diabetes, arthritis, respiratory disease and a range of cancers. It is not good enough for the federal minister for health to turn away from this problem and to try to pass the buck to the states by saying it is a state not a Commonwealth responsibility when Labor’s effective program showed that we could attend to people’s basic dental needs, cut down on waiting lists and have as part of our program preventive dental treatment. The evidence for the reintroduction of a Commonwealth funded dental program is compelling.

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

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

Mr JOHNSON (Ryan) (4.56 p.m.)—I compliment the member for Throsby for bringing forward this motion on dental health and acknowledge her genuine interest in this area of policy. But I also want to say that there is no dental health crisis. It seems everything that comes from the opposition is labelled with the word ‘crisis’. Public dental services, such as dental hospitals and school dental programs, are the responsibility of the state and territory governments. That should be said first of all. It is very important that the whole context and the complete picture is presented when we are having a debate about these sorts of issues.

The federal government funds state governments through the Australian health care agreements to deliver these services, along with other health services. State governments determine how this funding is allocated to cover their responsibilities. The federal government’s proposed new agreement will provide states and territories with up to $42 billion in funding, an increase of $10 billion. In 2003-04 the federal government will also provide the Department of Veterans’ Affairs with over $75 million to cover Australians who come under the veterans affairs portfolio. Besides this, the Department of Defence
will also receive funding for those who come under its area.

The Commonwealth dental health scheme was commenced in 1994, during the time of the Keating government. The member for Throsby failed to mention that it was intended to be a temporary program. Some $278 million was allocated by the Keating government in 1994 for the program to run for four years. I think it is appropriate that that point is injected into the debate. The target of the Keating government in 1994 was to treat 1.5 million Australians. It was, as I said, a temporary program. It was not intended to run indefinitely, and it is very important that that point is made.

The majority of Australians have access to dental care through private dental practices. The Australian Dental Association says that putting dental services into Medicare will not alleviate waiting times. It was, of course, the Australian Labor Party who when in office designed Medicare. The member for Throsby did not mention that dental or other allied health related services were never included in the Medicare Benefits Schedule. These were left largely to the private sector. It is somewhat surprising that members opposite do not make that point loud and clear.

The private health insurance rebate introduced by the coalition is the federal government funding that assists Australians throughout this country to pay for their private dental care. The 30 per cent private health insurance rebate has made it possible for some eight million Australians to have private health insurance cover that includes dental care. We all know, in this parliament and throughout the country, that part of the opposition’s ragtag policy is that it wants to abolish this 30 per cent rebate.

The private health insurance rebate covers ancillaries such as dental care. On average, Australian families are receiving some $800-plus a year for dental care and other ancillaries, as well as private hospital access. Private health insurance pays out some $1 billion a year for over 20 million dental services for its members. As I said, we all know that the Labor Party does not support this private rebate of 30 per cent. Interestingly enough, last week at the annual general meeting of the Kenmore Senior Citizens Association in my Ryan electorate, this was raised very strongly and I was asked to make inquiries in the parliament about the position of the 30 per cent rebate. I made it very clear that the government supports this but I was not so sure about the opposition. If this rebate were to be scrapped, those ordinary Australians the member for Throsby refers to would be the ones that would suffer tremendously. It is important that that policy be kept to help precisely those Australians that the member for Throsby talks about. *(Time expired)*

Ms KING (Ballarat) *(5.01 p.m.)*—I am pleased to be able to second the member for Throsby’s motion in relation to dental health care. In its very first budget the Howard government scrapped the Commonwealth Dental Health Program—a program initiated by a Labor government. To correct the record in relation to the member for Ryan’s comments on Australian health care agreements, Australian health care agreements originally contained funding for public hospitals and also had some mental health program funding within them. Public health outcome funding agreements were instituted to roll together public health funding, and the Commonwealth Dental Health Program was a separate program entirely.

What this government has done, by scrapping that program, is to say quite clearly that the Commonwealth government does not see dental health as a public health issue. In fact, it actually seems to say that dental health is a luxury item only for those privileged enough to afford it, and everybody else who is on a
low income and cannot afford it and who cannot access the public system—which is under incredible pressure because of the cuts that the Commonwealth made to the Commonwealth dental scheme—can go onto the waiting lists.

The Commonwealth Dental Health Program, costing some $100 million, provided dental health care to those who could least afford it in our community. The axing of the program led to not only lengthy waiting lists in state funded dental health care programs but also a declining standard of dental health for many members of our ageing community and those dependent on government financial support. In my electorate of Ballarat, it is not uncommon for constituents to now be waiting up to 36 months to access public dental care. In this time, a minor cavity that could be repaired easily and reasonably inexpensively could develop, and does develop, into a major problem requiring extensive restorative work and, in the worst case, often extraction.

The Labor government’s Commonwealth Dental Health Program had the aim of improving the dental health of those in need. The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare reported that eligible Australians who received publicly funded care under that program visited more frequently for dental care, reported less frequent experience of toothaches, experienced fewer extractions and were more satisfied with the dental care they received. And, more importantly, there were reduced waiting times. Waiting lengthy periods for dental care leads to poor dental health and places increased pressure on those waiting for dental treatment.

Dental health is a national public health problem. It has a significant impact on the quality of life of thousands of people, particularly those on low incomes. The Howard government seems to think that having access to dental care is a luxury, not an issue of public health. As the member for Throsby notes in her motion, poor dental health has implications for other medical conditions such as heart disease, diabetes, arthritis, respiratory disease and cancer. It contributes to poor nutrition and also significantly to longer term health problems. There are also psychological side effects—low self-esteem and often self isolation occurs when people have lost their teeth and are living with constant pain.

Having worked within the welfare sector for a large proportion of my early career, I saw many instances of 17-, 18- and 19-year-olds who were desperately trying to seek work who had lost their teeth and found it incredibly embarrassing to go for job interviews without any teeth at all. The Commonwealth Dental Health Program that Labor initiated assisted many of those young people in improving not only their self-esteem but also their appearance in order to get work. The Howard government’s axing of this program has been a cruel blow to many people on low incomes.

The Howard government and its health minister are not interested in fixing this problem. They are interested only in apportioning blame. The Howard government blames the states for the lengthy waiting lists and, in trying to rewrite history, forgets that it is in fact its doing away with the Commonwealth Dental Health Program that has led to the current lengthy waiting lists. The Labor government ensured in 1994 fair and affordable access to essential dental health services, only to be abandoned by the Howard government. The Howard government tries to run the argument that it is the states’ responsibility, but if we applied this principle to every other national public health program we would see the Commonwealth abrogating responsibility for women’s health programs such as cervical and breast screening. We
would see it abrogating responsibility for HIV and AIDS services, and we would see it opting out of drug services. If it applies to other national public health programs, why can’t it apply to a public health issue as important as dental health?

Through seconding the motion, I am recognising the adverse impact of the Commonwealth government’s abolition of the Commonwealth dental scheme on those members of the community in need. It is time that the government did the same. I am pleased to second the motion of the member for Throsby.

Mr HARTSUYKER (Cowper) (5.06 p.m.)—I welcome this motion which has been moved by the member for Throsby relating to the responsibility of providing dental health services in Australia. The Commonwealth government has funded the states and territories since 1901 to provide dental services. This includes responsibility for school dental health, health care cardholders, pensioner concession cardholders and emergency dental care. While most dental care occurs in private practice, the public provision of dental services is the responsibility of state and territory governments.

State governments are funded under Australian health care agreements to deliver a whole range of services. This includes public dental services. The funds provided under the agreements are not divided into elements for dental services and other allied health services. Therefore, the expenditure, range and extent of dental service provision is a matter for the states to determine. It is timely to note that the future health agreement that is currently on the table provides for a massive increase in funding from the federal government to the states. The last agreement was for $32 billion and the new agreement is for $42 billion, or an increase of $10 billion.

Under the existing health care agreements, the Commonwealth has provided $10.7 billion to the New South Wales government. In the period 1998 to 2002, with the support of health agreement funding, it is estimated that the New South Wales government will have funded close to 25,000 non-inpatient occasions of service for dental treatment. In addition to the recurrent funding to the states, the Commonwealth Dental Health Program was announced in the 1993 budget context, with the emergency scheme component commencing 1 January 1994 in most states and the general scheme commencing 1 July 1994. It was a temporary program with a total allocation of $278 million over four years. When the program was ceased on 31 December 1996 upon reaching the targeted 1.5 million persons treated, a total of $245 million has been provided by the Commonwealth government and a further $4.6 million has been spent on national projects and evaluation purposes.

It is not possible to obtain a clear and accurate description of how long people wait for public dental services, because of the time lags in reporting by the states and territories, and often the data is two years out of date by the time it is released. There are long waiting times for people in Victoria, which we are aware of. The Victorian Auditor-General’s report on community dental services showed that there was a mismatch between the government’s stated priority for oral health promotion and the mix of services being delivered. Access to treatment was inadequate for adults and youths. Public dental health services, with the exception of emergency care, are not being delivered on a timely basis. The VCOSS analysis of the 2003-04 health budget stated that the allocation to dental health does not keep pace with inflation or population growth, meaning a real effective decline in funding this year of 1.3 per cent.
The Commonwealth is assisting the states by offering $42 billion in the new Australian health care agreement which, if the states sign up to it today, will alleviate the stress on the public hospital system and, therefore, free up space for dental services. This represents an extra $10 billion or, to put it another way, a 17 per cent increase in real terms over the current agreement. The Commonwealth government accepts its responsibility for providing affordable access to dental services for private patients. It provides $2.3 billion a year for the 30 per cent private health insurance rebate which, on average, gives Australian families $800 a year for dental care and other ancillaries and access to private hospitals. People access dental health care through their ancillary cover. The 30 per cent rebate covers ancillaries. The Labor Party wants to scrap the rebate. This would further reduce access to dental services as ancillary cover is part of the rebate.

Private health insurance funds pay out $1 billion a year for more than 20 million dental services to their members. When we look at the bottom line of providing dental health services in Australia, I trust the members who sit on the opposition benches acknowledge where the responsibility rests. Dental health services have always been the responsibility of state governments. I invite the member for Throsby to ensure that her Labor Party colleagues at a state level fulfil their obligations.

When the emergency assistance was announced in 1994, there was never any mention of a commitment after the expiry of the program. As the recipients of the GST, state governments have never been in a better position to increase their commitments to public health. I know that in New South Wales the federal government has offered an additional $3.4 billion increase in funding for the public health system under the new health care agreement. I am sure the member for Throsby would agree that, if state Labor governments around the nation matched the federal health funding increase in percentage terms, the states would be able to meet their responsibilities. (Time expired)

Mrs IRWIN (Fowler) (5.11 p.m.)—Firstly, I congratulate the member for Throsby on bringing this most important issue before the House and for the passion that she has for the people that she represents. If you had to choose one issue which showed the difference between this government and Labor, it would be the issue of provision of dental health services. There would be many to choose from, but none would so clearly demonstrate the different priorities of this government and Labor.

This government has ripped off hundreds of millions of dollars previously provided for the dental treatment of poorer Australians to provide a subsidy for richer Australians to access dental treatment, including cosmetic dental treatment. It is like Robin Hood in reverse: it takes from the poorest Australians and gives to the richest. It leaves pensioners with broken dentures to live on baby food while they wait for treatment but subsidises a range of dental services for the well off. It leaves a generation of teenagers from poor families afraid to smile and expose their untreated dental problems whilst it subsidises the smiles of the sons and daughters of the rich. This is the worst example of welfare for the well off that we have ever seen in this country, and it is no exaggeration.

The figures speak for themselves. In its first budget, back in 1996—and I think the government member should listen to this—this government stopped the payment to the states of its $100 million per year contribution to pensioner dental services. In each of the seven further budgets, the government has not given one cent to pensioner dental
health services. It has so far ripped off $800 million from pensioner dental health.

On the other side, through the government subsidy to private health insurance, this year alone the government will provide $330 million for dental treatment for the well off. To get to that figure, you take the total cost of the private health insurance subsidy in this year’s budget, which is $2.3 billion. According to the Minister for Ageing, 30 per cent of the cost of private health insurance goes on ancillaries—that is, other services, including physiotherapy and, until recently, things like running shoes and relaxation CDs—but by far the largest cost for ancillary health services is dental health.

According to the Minister for Ageing, who gave these figures to the House on 15 May this year, dental services made up 50 per cent of the total cost of ancillary services. So if you take 50 per cent of the $660 million subsidising ancillary services you can see that this government will spend $330 million this year on providing dental treatment to those who can afford private health insurance and nothing on individuals and families without private health insurance, nothing on age pensioners and nothing on people who are on disability pensions or their dependants. If you are rich enough to be able to afford private health insurance the government pays out $330 million for dental care, but if you cannot afford private health insurance you get nothing.

We had the Minister for Ageing pleading the case for parents with private health cover:

So that you can take your kids to the dentist when you need to.

Now that is all fair enough, but what about parents who cannot afford private health insurance? Their kids go without dental care. This government provides only for the well off. If you are an age pensioner needing a new denture then your only hope is that a state government funded clinic will provide the service. The Commonwealth accepts responsibility for providing health services to pensioners and low-income earners, but it leaves dental health services to the states.

In the years leading up to 1996, the Labor federal government saw the need to assist the states in meeting this need. Labor provided $100 million a year to provide dental services to pensioners, but this government axed the funding as soon as it came to office. All this government can say is, ‘Let them eat soup.’ Shame! (Time expired)

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

Ocean Outfalls

Mr HUNT (Flinders) (5.16 p.m.)—I move:

That this House:

(1) deplores the damaging and destructive environmental impact of 142 ocean outfalls throughout Australia which are dumping treated and untreated sewage on our coastlines;

(2) notes the associated risks to human health, sustainable aquaculture and fisheries from the dumping of sewage into our coastal areas;

(3) condemns the annual waste of over 1.5 trillion litres of water throughout Australia resulting from the practice of dumping waste water rather than reusing it;

(4) calls upon the States to commit to the goal of ending all ocean outfall in Australia by the year 2025 and to adopt policies to achieve that goal;

(5) calls upon all local water boards to commit to the goal of ending all ocean outfall in Australia by the end of 2025 and to adopt policies to achieve that goal; and
calls upon the Federal Government to assist the States by helping coordinate a National Ocean Outfall Strategy aimed at coordinating the ending of all ocean outfall in Australia by the year 2025.

Australia’s coasts are being significantly damaged by the flow of our own sewage from 142 ocean outfalls around our coastline. That system was conceived at an earlier time when we needed solutions. That system is not the solution for today and it is not the solution for tomorrow. Australia needs a national ocean outfall strategy to overcome the failure by states and to overcome the crisis that faces our coastlines so that by the year 2025 ocean outfall dumping is a thing of the past.

An example of this comes from my own electorate of Flinders. The Gunnamatta Boags Rocks outfall represents the waste of approximately 150 billion litres of water annually—150 gigalitres of secondary treated sewage. Commencing at the Melbourne Water Eastern Treatment Plant, the water, which represents 42 per cent of Melbourne’s outfall, barrels under the Mornington Peninsula and is discharged into the ocean less than 50 metres from one of Australia’s great surf beaches. That is 420 megalitres—420 million litres—of ocean outfall secondary treated sewage going onto one of Australia’s great surf beaches. That is 150 gigalitres or 150 billion litres annually.

There are three consequences from this waste of water, both at Gunnamatta and nationally. First, there is localised and significant environmental damage. The marine ecology is distorted and marine life is damaged. Fishermen will explain this anecdotally, and certainly the hard evidence collected by groups such as the Clean Ocean Foundation shows that this is absolutely the case. Secondly, what we find is that there is also a risk to human health, and it is obviously the case that where you have the discharge of human sewage in an environment where people swim there will be risks of infection and damage to human health—and those are unacceptable risks. Thirdly, and perhaps most significantly over the long term, there is an extraordinary waste of captured water—150 gigalitres or 150 billion litres at the Gunnamatta outfall alone in Victoria.

What does this mean nationally? When we see that there are 142 outfalls, we recognise that 1.5 trillion litres of captured water which is within the grasp of authorities in each of the states are being cast out to sea. There are no great magic sources of new water on the eastern seaboard, but we do possess this extraordinary amount of water, the vast bulk of which is discharged on the eastern seaboard. It is already within the piping system, the treatment system and the catchment system, and yet we waste this resource. So, in a country which is parched, at a time when we have been suffering a significant drought and at a time when our urban areas have contributed significantly to the waste of water, we fail to recycle that which we have already captured.

There are three elements that we need to address if we are to solve this problem. Firstly, the first part of the water cycle is consumption. We have an extraordinarily high level of consumption. Our consumption of water for domestic use is significantly higher than the OECD average on a per capita basis. Within the domestic environment what we are failing to do is to implement proper usage controls and proper domestic recycling schemes. That is a critical element.

Secondly, there is the level of treatment. What we see is that, when treatment is increased, there is a significant capacity to reuse the water. The Bolivar plant in South Australia introduced a higher level of treatment and, as a result of that, in summer up to...
100 per cent of the water of this 100 megalitre a day plant—that is, 100 million litres a day—is reused. This is not for all the year, as that takes more time, but much of it is stored in aquifers. But up to 100 per cent of that water from a major city and a major plant is reused on a daily basis. So South Australia has been making some significant progress, and I commend successive governments for that. But around Australia as a whole we have failed to do that.

That leads to the third element in the chain of the water-use cycle—that is, reuse. Reuse levels in Australia are notoriously low for water coming out of the domestic and urban environments. So at present what we have is this: we see that there are significant efforts being undertaken by the Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister to lead the states on rural water reform. Those states have failed to take up the responsibility on urban water reform. In that light, we ourselves need to take a lead. We need to do that because of a failure of collective will.

So what is the solution? At the local level, in the case of the outfall within my own electorate at Gunnamatta, at Boags Rocks, there are four elements. It has been very interesting working with people such as the Clean Ocean Foundation, the former head of the Urban Land Authority, John Lawson, and the state member for Nepean, Martin Dixon, because what has been produced is a four-stage plan. Firstly, the reuse of additional outpour water in the Mornington Peninsula area on golf courses and for agricultural purposes once tertiary stage treatment has been achieved; secondly, the reuse of that water in the Western Port area; and, thirdly, and very significantly, the channelling of 60 of those 150 gigalitres per year up the Scoresby corridor for pumping through the Kew station and back to the Western treatment plant where it would significantly dilute the salt content of the current water being produced, which would make it available for use in the Western Plains. Fourthly, options are being investigated for reusing the pipe through to the Tarago dam to replace the flows of fresh water which are currently being used for industrial purposes in the Latrobe Valley. Using lower grade water for industrial purposes would free up the potable water for return to the Gippsland lake system.

At the national level, we need to conceive a 25-year vision based on eight simple principles. Firstly, we need to establish a prime ministerial commission or a mechanism for integrating the states—because they have failed to do so collectively—which will assess current waste water flows and the existing demand for recycled water. Secondly, we need to assess all possible of ways of encouraging demand for that water. Thirdly, we need to assess the technology. Fourthly, we need to assess the costs related to improving water quality. Fifthly, we have to value the revenue from recycling the water and related products. Sixthly, we have to examine the opportunities for private and public partnerships. Seventhly, we have to identify all the systemic reforms necessary. Finally, we have to identify the development opportunities which have been delayed or scaled back through the absence of such water. Ultimately, we are able over the coming 20 years to produce a plan and to reuse our water in a way which protects our coastal environment, which protects our health and which works on a practical basis to reuse water which is currently being lost and wasted. I commend this motion to the House. (Time expired)

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

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

Mr KELVIN THOMSON (Wills) (5.26 p.m.)—This is a motion which in itself is worthy of consideration and support. It is
unfortunately clear, however, that the member for Flinders has moved it in a transparent attempt to recover the ground which he and the Liberal Party on the Mornington Peninsula have lost through their disgraceful plan to flog off 90 hectares of defence department land at Point Nepean, a plan which the people of the Mornington Peninsula have rightly and clearly rejected. It is also unfortunately clear that the Liberal government, which he supports, have no commitment to closing down ocean outfalls. They have made this clear by shedding any responsibility for water reuse research. This is critical because using our water better—and, in particular, reusing our water—is the key to tackling the problem of ocean outfalls.

The Urban Water Research Association’s strategic plan of 1993-96 recommended three priority areas for research: urban development, environment and water resources, and the performance of water authorities. But, under the Howard government, Commonwealth research in this crucial area has largely dried up. Research is now mostly carried out with funding from the Water Services Association of Australia, which has become increasingly focused on the third of these priorities to the exclusion of the first two.

In October 2000, 180 delegates at a Water Recycling Australia symposium in Adelaide unanimously carried a resolution calling for the establishment of a national water reuse research program. There is no national body dedicated to water research, yet it is important that detailed research is carried out. Water quality is a matter of great community sensitivity. Any adverse health consequences from a water reuse project would constitute a massive setback for the cause of sustainable water use in Australia. If the Liberal government were at all serious about this issue it would be driving water research rather than getting out of it. Funding for this could readily be found from the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality, which continues to be seriously underspent.

Indeed, we do need to tackle the problem of ocean outfalls. Large and growing human populations on the coastal fringe place pressures on coastal ecosystems, particularly through the disposal of sewage waste in coastal waters. There are around 140 sewage outfalls discharging into the ocean and estuaries within the vicinity of beaches in Australia. The discharge of sewage effluent into coastal waters, including estuaries, increased by eight per cent, to 1,325 gigalitres per year, between 1994 and 2000. It is predicted to rise by more than a third, to 1,800-plus gigalitres per year, by 2020. In order to reduce the total amount of effluent being discharged into coastal waters by the year 2020, the reuse of sewage effluent would have to increase by more than 330 gigalitres per year during this 20-year period.

Coastal communities, surfing clubs and beach goers generally do not like ocean outfalls. They have a not unreasonable suspicion that wastes are being sent out to sea on the ‘out of sight, out of mind’ principle. Reusing treated water on the land is a sign of good faith by water authorities. It shows we have confidence that our treatment processes have made the water safe for humans and other life. The federal government must work harder with state and local water authorities to dramatically reduce the amount of water being discharged via ocean outfalls.

Sending treated effluent out to sea is not merely an environmental issue for beach goers; it is a waste of a precious resource. Instead of seeing effluent as a problem to be treated, often at great expense, we should see it as a resource to be used. The largest component of sewage effluent being disposed of is fresh water, and disposal to oceans is wasteful. Increasing urban reuse will reduce
the need to build costly water storages, which in addition have been shown to have a serious impact on the ecology of Australian rivers. There will be benefits for water utilities where water reclamation is an accepted part of the business, enabling them to sell the same water twice, meet environmental flow constraints on taking water from catchments and achieve regulated standards for return of water to the environment.

There is important symbolism in urban water users doing their bit to conserve and reuse water. Droughts and water shortages hit farmers and rural people hard, and some of the decisions needed to address past water overallocation to irrigators will not be easy. It is only fair that everyone, both country and city, pull their weight in making our water use sustainable.

Mr WAKELIN (Grey) (5.32 p.m.)—Congratulations to the member for Flinders for raising this issue—I know of his keen interest—and to the members of the opposition for their keen interest. The water issues of Australia are to the fore in a way which is very welcome. As you would expect me to, I give the Commonwealth government deserved praise for its contribution with the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality—which the member for Wills, who is leaving the chamber, acknowledged—and the Natural Heritage Trust. We are now into Natural Heritage Trust II, which will continue to make a significant contribution on this very serious issue.

In supporting the motion deploiring the damaging and destructive environmental impact of the 142 ocean outfalls throughout Australia which are dumping treated and untreated sewage along our coastline, I want to tell a positive story. I want to talk about the cooperation between the Commonwealth government—through the mechanism of the Natural Heritage Trust—the local government of Port Lincoln and industry, which over the last four or five years has developed a model costing, in the first stage, somewhere near $3 million. If anyone knows anything of Port Lincoln, they know that it has a very valuable aquaculture industry and that very high hygiene standards are needed to maintain its clean, green image—and it is not just an image; it is a reality—so it is able to export to the markets of the world.

This project was developed within the Commonwealth NHT bureaucracy through the initiative of the local government and SA Water—which is the South Australian government agency—as well as industry. They brought in something like $3 million, to which the Commonwealth made a 50 per cent contribution—about $1½ million. This project, which is under the auspices of Flinders University, brings all these things together in a way which is unprecedented—certainly in my region—as a model for the rest of Australia. It was only three or four months ago that I had the pleasure of turning on the sprinklers on an oval in Port Lincoln to which the water was being turned back from the outfall. We still have a lot to do, but this is the sort of model that I think the member for Flinders was speaking of.

I want to touch on a few things which I think the cooperative models can learn from what was, in a sense, I suppose, a pilot or experimental model. There is much more to be done in many other areas, as indicated by the 142 ocean outfalls. We need clear transparency of the state agencies—in South Australia’s case it is SA Water—regarding the cost of delivery and consumption of water, whether it comes out of reuse or out of the system at large—that is, out of the reservoirs or the underground basins. At the moment, we have a state based pricing system which does not give us any transparency. In other words, we might be buying water at $1 a kilolitre, but it could well be costing us $3 a
kilolitre to put it there. We are left with a monoculture, if you like. But Flinders University, to its great credit, has done some of the technical work in terms of understanding this issue. Certainly there is much more work to be done, but I offer the Port Lincoln example as supporting the principle that the member for Flinders espouses. (Time expired)

Mr JENKINS (Scullin) (5.37 p.m.)—I welcome the opportunity this motion gives to us to discuss something which, whilst we might describe it as a major environmental problem, is also a major environmental opportunity. I welcome it in the context that an inquiry is to be held by the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Environment and Heritage into the development of sustainable cities to 2025. This reminded me that back in April 1991 the then House of Representatives Standing Committee on Environment, Recreation and the Arts tabled a report entitled The injured coastline: protection of the coastal environment. Of course, 12 years ago when we were conducting that inquiry, ocean outfalls were very high on the agenda of people’s interests. Regrettably, 12 years on we are still having a similar debate. I think that really behoves badly on both sides of politics. I urge the federal government to show leadership and have a national outfall strategy that brings the states and territories into a national approach. We have the opportunity to rectify the things that have occurred over the past couple of hundred years.

The member for Flinders quite rightly raises the issue of the Gunnamatta sewage outfall because it is an issue for him locally. To the extent that the Victorian government acknowledge this is a problem, they have in place a number of strategies that perhaps only in the short to medium term address this as a problem. But we must applaud the fact that they are actually doing something. They are looking for a strategy to treat sewage to a tertiary level to produce a so-called class A effluent. They want to explore the ways in which that effluent can be reused, and they have set 20 per cent reuse as an immediate target. They would like to see, down the track, no need for this type of outfall and 100 per cent reuse. We have to set these guidelines to get a cultural change in the way people perceive the use of this important resource.

This debate has highlighted that we have the opportunity to redirect for proper use a very important resource. At a time when major capital cities around Australia have water shortages, we must explore the avenues that are available to ensure that we can reuse the resource. I have often wondered why it is that biological technology to treat sewage at source through wetlands, which has been demonstrated throughout Australia, has not gained more popular acceptance. I know that in an area close to my electorate a new residential development was proposed. That development proposed that its sewage effluent would be treated through a wetlands concept but, because it is just outside the urban fringe of metropolitan Melbourne, it was decried. We really need to see these forms of technology—the potential and possibilities of which the then House of Representatives environment committee reported on back in 1991—being used. Twelve years on, we still have scepticism about the ways in which they can be used. The member for Flinders mentioned the practices at the Bolivar sewage treatment plant in South Australia. We visited that plant 12 years ago. We have seen what can be achieved through cooperation between a public utility and private companies in using water as a valuable resource to then produce other natural resources that can be moved into the economy in an ecologically and economically sustainable way.
There are great opportunities, but we must acknowledge that this cannot become a political football. It cannot become something where there is finger pointing and a blame game between the levels or spheres of government. I think it is incumbent upon the federal government to show leadership, and I have said this about a number of areas. I really do wish to stress to my colleagues on the other side that I do not care which political persuasion there is federally; I think there is a great need, in a federation bound by a Constitution from the century before last, for national policy. There is a requirement for the national government to show that type of leadership. It is regrettable, in such a basic area as proper research into water reuse, that we have not seen continuing efforts by the federal government. (Time expired)

Mr Lloyd (Robertson) (5.42 p.m.)—I was very pleased to second this motion, and I commend the member for Flinders for introducing it into the House. Obviously the disposal of sewage in a country such as Australia is an important environmental issue. The loss of millions of litres of water in sewage outfalls is also a very important consideration. I want to speak about some improvements that have been made to ocean outfalls. Inshore ocean outfalls are basically disgusting. They provide no benefit to the community, and they are a health risk and a visual risk as well. Certainly they are an issue in some areas in Victoria—such as the Gunnamatta outfall, which is an inshore outfall—and elsewhere in Australia.

I want to highlight the advantages of the deepwater ocean outfalls that are operating in Sydney. The reason I want to do this is that I am the holder of a marine master's ticket class 4. I worked for some time with an innovative company called Land and Marine Pty Ltd. They are oceanographers and hydrographers. They are a research company that has the contract to survey the ocean outfalls in Sydney at North Head, Bondi and Malabar. A lot of people in Sydney would remember the terrible pollution created by the inshore outfalls. Since these ocean outfalls have been in place, the visual and other pollution in Sydney Harbour has diminished amazingly. Fish and ocean animal populations near these deep ocean outfalls have increased significantly since these outfalls were commissioned some 10 years ago. There have been no instances of degradation to the ocean floor or to the animal populations that live on the ocean floor near or far from the outfalls. I have seen that in my own research and through the ROV cameras when I have been on board boats.

The risk to human health from the disposal of treated human waste in the deep ocean outfalls is statistically minute. It is almost nonexistent compared to the inshore outfalls, which are a significant health risk. The deep ocean outfalls do not present a plume to the surface of the oceans so they do not present a health risk. The deep ocean outfalls diffuse the treated effluent and nutrients into the ocean at a depth of over 40 to 100 metres. The accepted technology gives you a string of diffuser towers along a long distance so that the nutrients can be taken up and processed by the water column and the animals therein, to the benefit of the near-shore population.

I certainly support the new and innovative methods that are being introduced for the treatment of sewage sludge or screened residues from the treatment works. The Port Stephens Bedminster plant is successfully treating huge volumes of suburban garbage in conjunction with sewage sludge. These plants use the sewage sludge in conjunction with household garbage waste and convert a high percentage of both products into compost, which is suitable for a very wide range of pastures and forest improvements. There are plans in process for many more of these
plants right around Australia. Of course, they also save many millions of litres of water. A big concern to me is the number of sewage outflows into the Hawkesbury River. That is something that needs to be addressed.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. D.G.H. Adams)—Order! The time allocated for private members’ business has expired. The debate is interrupted in accordance with standing order 104A. The debate is adjourned and the resumption of the debate will be made an order of the day for the next sitting.

GRIEVANCE DEBATE

Question proposed:
That grievances be noted.

Medicare: Bulk-Billing

Ms HALL (Shortland) (5.46 p.m.)—Today I would like to highlight a crisis facing Australians. This crisis was created by the Howard government and it impacts on both the provision of and access to health care. Each and every day, members on this side of the House hear heart-rending stories of how people in their electorates cannot get an appointment with their doctor—or any local GP, for that matter—and that, if they do manage to get an appointment, it is almost guaranteed that their doctor will not bulk-bill.

The government’s response to the decline in bulk-billing and the medical crisis in Australia guarantees the demise of Medicare, which is something the Prime Minister has always been committed to. After all, it is the Prime Minister who has described Medicare at various times as a cruel, miserable fraud; a scandal; a total and complete failure; a quagmire; and a total disaster. He promised to pull Medicare right apart and get rid of the bulk-billing system, which he described as an absolute rort. The people I represent in this parliament think that it is an essential part of our Australian life. Since this government was elected in 1996, it has systematically undermined Medicare. This has been obvious throughout Australia. People in the electorate I represent have been absolutely disgusted by the fact that bulk-billing has declined to 51.2 per cent. This has been the case throughout the whole of Australia, with the bulk-billing rate continuing to decline. It is having an enormous impact on real people. It means that people have to make decisions about whether or not they can afford to go to the doctor.

It is also having an effect on doctors. Doctors are finding it harder and harder to deliver services. The other side of the government’s failure is that since 1996 it has restricted the number of provider numbers. Also, there has been a decline in the number of doctors. So we are now in a situation where we have a chronic shortage of doctors in Australia, and that has really been the creation of this government. This shortage can be measured in a number of ways. On the Central Coast of New South Wales, which is part of my electorate, in the area of San Remo there are 3,884 people and there is no doctor. It is quite an isolated area and the only way that you can travel to a doctor is by taking a very long bus trip or, alternatively, hopping in the car and driving some 10 minutes to the nearest doctor. It is a very distinct community and it really needs a doctor. In the northern part of the electorate of Dobell the situation is even worse. Blue Haven, the suburb adjoining San Remo, has 4,698 residents and no doctor. Watanobbi has 3,215 residents and no doctor. The suburbs of Warnervale, Wallarah, Wadalba and Hamlyn Terrace have a combined population of 3,142 and no GP.

I find it very disturbing that the government has been so quiet on this subject. I was at a public meeting at The Entrance in the electorate of Dobell. At this public meeting,
a number of people raised issues of great importance. The things they raised were that doctors in the area are not bulk-billing, they have to travel some distance to get to a Medicare office, there are no doctors in Bateau Bay and there are only four doctors in the area that bulk-bill. Another issue they brought up was that the Senate has to save Medicare. People have to go and wait for long periods of time in hospitals. After people visit doctors and pay specialists, they have very little money for food. Medical insurance and the medical indemnity issue need to be dealt with properly by the government. It was also pointed out that $32 for a visit was the average cost of a consultation and that some specialists are charging as much as $175 up front. It was quite disturbing to learn all of those facts.

During the break I also attended some public meetings in other areas of Australia. At the invitation of the member for Banks, I attended a meeting in Banks. The New South Wales health minister was present at that meeting. He said that the state government has been arguing with the Commonwealth government to bring about changes to Medicare to save it. He pointed out that the $917 million promised by the Commonwealth government to increase bulk-billing is not extra funding; rather it is money that is being ripped out of the state hospitals. This will increase the pressure that already exists in the hospital system and put a strain upon an already strained public hospital and public emergency system. He went on to say that there was a direct correlation between the decrease in bulk-billing and the increase in the use of accident and emergency departments of public hospitals. He referred to the areas of Port Macquarie and Coffs Harbour, where a four per cent decrease in bulk-billing had led to a 10 per cent increase in visits to public hospital accident and emergency departments. He went on to say that he felt that public hospitals had been disadvantaged and penalised under the Howard government.

At the meeting there were some very interesting comments from the locals. They sent a clear message that the last thing they wanted was an American style health system where only those who could afford private health care would get decent health care. At the meeting, Lurline from Peakhurst said that the health system would return to the way it was in the 1970s if the Howard government’s A Fairer Medicare package were introduced. She said:

The Howard plan will put adequate health care out of reach for a lot of people—young and old ... It will diminish the quality of the health care system.

Kerry from Riverwood, a sole parent with five children, said that it would have a big impact on her family and families in general. She said:

When one of my kids comes down with something all of them usually do ... If I have to pay to take them to the doctor it will be impossible.

This is the way we are going in Australia. I also attended some meetings in Brisbane in the electorates of Petrie and Dickson. Issues raised there included the government’s action in ripping apart the Commonwealth Dental Health Program, patients having to wait long periods of time for appointments and doctors closing their books. The issue of doctors closing their books was very common on the Central Coast in the electorate of Dobell, as was the issue of people travelling from Dobell to Sydney to see a doctor that bulk-billed, because it costs $2.20 for a return trip on the train as opposed to having to pay between $5 and $15 to visit a local doctor. There is pressure on services. Public hospitals are being forced to react because of the failure of doctors to bulk-bill. There is the issue of medical indemnity and, once again, the government’s failure to deal with it.
Everywhere I visited, the government’s failure was brought to my notice through the issues of work force shortages, the government’s failure to address work force shortages and the government’s proposal for a Fairer Medicare package spelling the death of Medicare. It is a proposal that will see bulk-billing only available to the most disadvantaged. All other Australians will have to pay. My advice to members on the other side of this House is that they should listen to their constituents. (Time expired)

Health: Parkinson’s Disease

Defence: HMAS Albatross and HMAS Creswell

Mrs GASH (Gilmore) (5.56 p.m.)—I rise not to speak of a grievance as such but on a really positive note. In Moss Vale in my electorate we have a very active Parkinson’s support group. The group consists of Dr Mariese Hely, the patron of the Parkinson’s group; Dr McWilliam, the President of Parkinson’s New South Wales and a former senior executive of the Reserve Bank; Rod Irwin, a former diplomat with service in India, former High Commissioner in the Solomon Islands, Mauritius, Fiji and Turkey, former executive director of the Head Injury Council, former senior executive in the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the International Branch of the Department of Social Security, the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet and the Australian Development Assistance Bureau and a member of the Wingecarribee Shire Council community services consultative committee; Doug Millar, a retired financial adviser and farmer; Courtney Clark OAM JP, a company director, former board member for dairy and pork in New South Wales, former consumer affairs adviser, former public relations consultant and a member of Parkinson’s NSW; Fay McCarthy, a retired state public servant; Pam Cruickshank, a carer; Dympna Irwin, a retired law clerk; and Marj Webb, a businesswoman. I list these occupations to show that it matters not who you are or what you do, Parkinson’s can and will touch anyone.

Recently the Minister for Health and Ageing, Senator the Hon. Kay Patterson, met with this group to see how we could achieve better recognition for their disease by government, GPs, sufferers’ families and the greater community, especially in the ability to access research. Several immediate possibilities were identified which involved making use of programs already available within the health portfolio. These will assist the Parkinson’s support group to begin a public education campaign and to talk to GPs about the vast range of conditions that might indicate onset of the disease long before any shaking appears.

It seems there are many people in the community who have some occasional strange symptoms for which they have no label. In fact, several members of the support group went for years wondering what was happening to them before being diagnosed. Because there are about 60 known symptoms of Parkinson’s, of which only a few might be present, diagnosis is not easy. There is a need to bring Parkinson’s disease to everyone’s attention, to highlight the huge range of possible symptoms and to identify and begin helping those people in our communities who until now have thought they should just hide themselves away.

I commend Rod and Dympna Irwin on their hard work in bringing this matter to our attention and congratulate their Parkinson’s support group and the doctor who supports them on gathering at short notice to meet the minister. After the meeting we discussed an action plan of where to start, and already they are responding to the minister’s action list by providing further information and making contact with departmental officers.
On Monday, 25 August there will be a conference in Queensland on Parkinson’s. Suggestions for action are: a survey to see how many have symptoms; education and training kits, including videos; and media handouts. My colleague Teresa Gambaro is also working on this issue with the Parkinson’s support group. With everyone in this House, we would like to bring a positive change to the way Parkinson’s is understood so that sufferers and their families no longer feel they must hide themselves away. I encourage my colleagues to bring Parkinson’s disease to the attention of all in their electorates. We need to work together to combat these matters.

My electorate of Gilmore is fortunate to have HMAS Albatross within its boundaries and HMAS Creswell right next door, with many of its staff, students and visitors living, shopping or enjoying their leisure in Gilmore. I say ‘fortunate’ because a defence base can bring many positive things to a region, some of which I would like to highlight tonight, but first I want to announce that our appreciation of defence personnel will be demonstrated in a practical sense next Saturday, 16 August, when members of the 816, 817 and 723 squadrons and their support staff from HMAS Albatross will march in a homecoming parade through Nowra’s main streets. Our defence personnel have served in the two Relex operations, protecting Australia’s borders; in Operation Bastille, enforcing United Nations sanctions in the Middle East; and in Operation Falconer in the war against terrorism in Iraq. Commodore Geoff Ledger, Commander Australian Navy Aviation Group, will take the salute in the presence of my colleague Minister Danna Vale. The parade will be joined by veterans and cadet units from right across the electorate. Young and old, all our residents are proud of the men and women who serve our country. A number of those who came home have already been redeployed, some to the operation to restore peace in the Solomons.

Now I will return to the benefits of defence bases. HMAS Albatross supports four naval air squadrons—the 723, 816, 817 and 805—which provide aircraft and air support for our ships. The base is also the home of the Navy Aviation Force Element Group, headed by Commander Australian Navy Aviation Group, Commodore Geoff Ledger. Additionally, there are a number of lodger units at Albatross. They include the Australian Joint Acoustic Analysis Centre, the RAN Tactical Electronic Warfare Support Section, the Navy Aviation Systems Project Office and the Army Parachute Training School.

The Naval Air Station, including the Army Parachute Training School, has a population of 1,135 uniformed personnel and 400 defence civilians. The uniformed personnel numbers are made up of approximately 981 Navy, 114 Army and 40 RAAF. There are also a number of large and small contractors operating from the base and from the Albatross Aviation Technology Park adjacent to the airfield. The majority of these people live in our local area. Their children attend our local schools. They are involved with local sporting associations. They shop, dine and attend social functions in and are generally involved with our local community. Over many years the base has assisted during medical emergencies, searches, bushfires, rescues and floods. HMAS Albatross has a long and proud association with the Shoalhaven community.

HMAS Creswell is located in the southwestern corner of Jervis Bay and serves as a support base for RAN fleet units and other Army and RAAF units operating in the East Australian Exercise Area. Creswell is also the site of the Royal Australian Naval College, which provides training for all new naval officers and ongoing leadership and man-
agement training for junior officers and senior sailors. *Creswell* supports the Navy School of Ship Survivability and Safety, Beecroft Weapons Range and the operations of the Kalkara remotely piloted aerial target system. As a training base *Creswell’s* population is rarely static. However, it typically has about 120 permanent uniformed defence personnel, about 30 permanent defence civilians, about 125 non-defence civilians—contractors—in garrison support roles and about 120 uniformed trainees, but periodically as many as 200, in residence.

During the recent bushfires in 2000 and 2001, about 60 base staff contributed to firefighting tasks in the local region. As an employer, Defence, through its garrison support contracts, directly employs many local residents in its establishments. Defence also relies heavily on specialist commercial technical support. Many defence members live locally and shop in the area. It is no cliche that defence members are the country’s finest. They are often model citizens with a strong sense of community and comparatively high morals. Many offer their services as volunteers in extracurricular activities. Therefore, they are ideal people to have in any electorate.

Many people would be surprised to hear me call Defence a protector of the environment, but Defence today adheres to a rigidly observed set of environmental guidelines that ensure the preservation of the flora, fauna and landscape in the area. As a visiting French documentary team recently noted in the script of the film they are making of Jervis Bay, without the Navy’s presence there since 1913 that side of the bay would have been built up years ago. While many hail the pristine state of Jervis Bay and have rushed to make it a marine park, few have praised the Navy for keeping it in that pristine state. Our Navy occupies and uses the headlands on either side of the entrance. It has for a long time run defence exercises inside and outside Jervis Bay, and its facilities continue to operate inside the bay, yet I have heard nobody thank Defence for the care it has taken of our heritage. Nothing happens for defence purposes on or near Jervis Bay without the full environmental effects being determined, considered and mitigated.

Defence also provides protection of the nation’s heritage. Similar to its proactive environmental stewardship, Defence has a notable track record of supporting the national heritage. For example, the historical collection at HMAS *Creswell* is home to thousands of photographs and items that highlight our naval heritage. This collection, together with the unique buildings of the Naval College, Beecroft Peninsula and the Naval Aviation Museum, reaches back to the early days of the country and marks our growth since Federation. In short, the benefits of having Defence in a locality are varied. It adds to the social strength of a region.

Our defence bases are full of young, competent, active and committed defence personnel who have a purpose in their lives and who know where they are going with their careers. To the general community they also bring strength, a sense of responsibility and excellent morale. I said that our defence bases bring many things to our region. I would like to nominate a few of those things, besides pride for the people who are doing their job well. I refer to the contractors who provide operational and commercial support to these bases.

**Social Democracy**

*Mr Latham* (Werriwa) (6.06 p.m.)—I grieve for the paucity of social capital in Australia, particularly under the policy neglect of the Howard government. I think it is important to debate issues of social capital—the things that need to be done to build
stronger communities in our society. I get a lot of feedback from people saying that the loss of traditional family and community institutions is a great worry. We are losing close trusting relationships between people, and as a society in that environment we are all much diminished. Indeed, in the era of globalisation, I would argue that community matters more, not less. Globalisation is asking us to trust in strangers, to trust in people we are never going to meet face to face, and to trust in people we will never get to know on a personal level. It is very hard to build trusting relationships in a globalised environment if we do not have a strong inner core of trust and social capital in our local neighbourhoods. Indeed, how can we trust in strangers and how can we answer the call of globalisation if we do not even know the name of our next-door neighbours? These are pressing concerns: we need a strong inner core of social capital and we need to build experiences of trust and solidarity between people so we can build a stronger and more effective society.

There are signs that people still care about these issues. People still care passionately about neighbourhoods and about community. Hugh McKay, the social commentator, has said his research finds that while people tend to glaze over some globalisation issues they want to be involved with the things they can touch—the tangible things in their own neighbourhood whereby they can make a positive difference. So people still care about each other and there is very much a longing to belong in our society. In my work, I find that people do not necessarily talk about the massive expansion of free market forces or the massive expansion of government. They want the expansion of society, the expansion of community and the strong trusting relationships between people to try and move against the recent trends whereby we have seen the breakdown of family and traditional institutions, an increase in loneliness and an increase in the number of sole person households in this country. People have this yearning and this longing to belong and it is important to recognise that here in the national parliament.

There is also an element of paradox: while people are wanting to belong to relationships of trust and social capital, there is also something of an institutional rebellion going on in our society in which hierarchical authoritarian institutions that tell people what to do are losing membership and support. We are at an interim period when people are looking for new ways in which to do things collectively at a local level but are yet to develop the new tools of self-governance. They are rebelling against the top-down institutions and they are wanting to do more locally but they are yet to develop the tools of self-governance and community building.

I believe there is a role for government to facilitate social capital. It is an important issue. But we also need to recognise the change in technique that is required. There is no way in this place that we can ever move a social capital bill that turns into a social capital act that will automatically mean that people are going to be more trusting and cooperative throughout our society. The change in technique is for government to act as a facilitator, an enabler, to influence the social environment which gives people more opportunities to work together cooperatively and to work together in trusting relationships.

There are things that government can do; the most important is to give people things to do. I do not necessarily want to see people campaigning for better services; I want people to be running them—the community housing, the community banks, the civic education, the parks and the recreation programs at a neighbourhood level that can make a positive difference. Social capital is
not like stock that stands there—people cannot bank it away, like some sort of asset or stock of goods. Unless people use their social capital, they lose it. You have to use it or lose it. People must have things to do and forums in which they can build trusting, cooperative relationships. That is very important.

The second area of government action concerns building a serious agenda for lifelong learning. All the international research shows that highly educated, highly skilled societies have high levels of social capital. Why is this? Self-knowledge and the benefits of education help people to understand the positions of others and to trust in strangers.

The third agenda is to solve poverty. The evidence again shows that where people live in conditions of material disadvantage, they turn in socially. When materially deprived, they turn in socially, and that is a loss of social capital. A new national campaign, indeed a new national war against poverty, would be a very important public policy initiative.

The fourth agenda is to cut down on commuter travelling time. People with busy lives do not have the time and capacity to do a lot of things locally if they are stuck in traffic jams day and night. We need to develop edge cities—move the jobs, the services, the infrastructure and the opportunities much closer to the urban fringe—and cut down commuter travelling time to give people the capacity to work in their neighbourhoods and in their communities.

Urban design is another important initiative. I have mentioned before in the parliament that I have been struck by the work of Gosnells council which is located south of Perth. That council is redesigning urban form, working on the basis that a village type urban design is going to foster greater community and greater neighbourhoods and in fact provide a natural form of surveillance—someone walking past your home actually deters burglars and lowers the rate of crime. I am glad to hear reports that some private developers are moving in the direction of returning urban design to village principles. It is very important for social solidarity and social capital.

The sixth initiative is to recognise a natural limit on the market. Market forces sometimes can be destructive of social capital. For instance, individual employment contracts, individualistic arrangements in the workplace, obviously work against the collective solidarity of society. There are some things that I believe are the preserve of community, and sport is a good example. We have had too much commercialisation of sport. There are too many companies taking over the sporting organisations that used to be run by people at a local level.

The final area of public policy initiative is corporate social responsibility—building social partnerships, building bridges from the economic to the social and ensuring that we have much more than passive philanthropy in Australia. I do not want executives writing out cheques on the 25th floor, thinking they have discharged their responsibilities to the disadvantaged at that point. I want them working face to face, developing and dedicating their skills to help people, to build relationships of trust across class barriers, across economic divides, and to build genuine partnerships and corporate social responsibility. That is an important agenda. If we do not have strong community life and if we do not have a deep and active democracy, it is much easier for elites and minorities to take control of the system—for the system to be run by the few instead of the many. We need the dispersal of power, and community building is an important part of that objective. These things are all important, and I have outlined what is a significant policy agenda.
We can learn a lesson from the Treasurer, Mr Costello. In recent times he has spoken about social capital but in a very vacuous fashion. He rolled out nothing more than a series of motherhood statements. He demonstrated yet again that, on social capital, he is a policy free zone. Why didn’t he talk about the things that I mentioned earlier: the active social policy agenda that can be adopted to do something constructive about this particular issue? There are things that can be done. I welcome the fact that Mr Costello has joined the debate. He is 10 years late to the debate, but better late than never. I urge him in future to offer something more than platitudes.

In fact, I felt a bit sorry for the bellyflop he experienced at the Sydney Institute, pumping up expectations about his new agenda for tolerance and social capital but delivering next to nothing. Of course after that bellyflop at the Sydney Institute he went on to the CIS concilium just last week and tried to pull the old Dr Knowledge trick. This is when, after he had had a bad experience—the previous speech having flopped, as it did at the Sydney Institute—he had the impression that if he rolled out 50 sources, if he mentioned the views of 50 other people, then the audience and those reading his speech might think that he was smart. Well, the Dr Knowledge trick did not work too well for him. It ended up with yet another bellyflop, because he spoke about the views and beliefs of Roosevelt’s New Deal, Johnson’s Great Society, Keynesian economics, the Whitlam government, the Centre for Independent Studies, the Centre for Policy Studies, Nikita Kruschev, the IMF, the World Bank, the OECD, the ALP, Margaret Thatcher, the Third Way, Sidney Blumenthal, Tony Blair, French farmers, John Carroll, Robert Manne, Michael Pusey, Clive Hamilton, Lee Kuan Yew, the Japanese MITI, the Asian tigers, the Gulf states, the Sydney Olympics and, finally, the SAS. But what did Peter think, having brought out the Dr Knowledge list of people that he has referred to or footnoted? The only ones who did not get a guernsey were L. Ron Hubbard and the Dalai Lama. So it was quite unfortunate to see him engage in this activity—again, nothing more than platitudes, commentary and motherhood statements.

It is indicative of someone who started his political time as a Labor Baptist and ends up as a Liberal Anglican. Talk about dazed and confused: he does not know where he has been, let alone where he is going. If you do not know where you are going, you never know what you believe in. He is the lost soul of the Liberal Party, and I urge others on the coalition side—particularly the members for Parramatta and Warringah, who have constructive things to say about social capital—to step up to the plate. We know Costello is a flake. You can do a lot better in Parramatta and Warringah by bringing forward a good social capital agenda. The Treasurer has flopped, we can do a lot better and I urge the government to adopt the agenda I have outlined here today. I urge those thoughtful members opposite to step forward and make up for the inadequacies of the member for Higgins.

Fisheries: Great Barrier Reef

Mr NEVILLE (Hinkler) (6.16 p.m.)—My electorate, and several others along the Queensland coastline, boasts a vibrant and dynamic commercial fishing industry, an industry which is currently in a state of flux over the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority’s Representative Areas Program, or RAP. Its potential impact on recreational fishers is also quite worrying. The thrust behind the RAP is the introduction of more marine national park zones within the Great Barrier Reef. The most restrictive of these zones are colloquially known as green zones or no-take zones. Currently, less than five per
cent of the Great Barrier Reef is protected by these green zones, and if all the recommendations are accepted, then that figure will go up to 25 per cent of the marine park area. Flat out, that means that no form of commercial fishing can take place within those zones. In addition, there are yellow zones where only bait and recreational fishing can take place.

A succession of state and federal agencies over the years have imposed closures upon Queensland fishermen, and may I say from my own experience that the science used to justify many of these closures was less than convincing. The East Coast trawl plan, which was progressively implemented from 1999 onwards, is an example of the willingness of the fishing industry to work with government. In 2001 the effort unit system was put in place in association with the East Coast Trawl Fisheries Structural Adjustment Scheme. This system capped and reduced the amount of commercial fishing which could take place in designated waters. Under the scheme, the Commonwealth contributed $10 million, the state government $10 million and the industry itself around five per cent of effort units, which translated into $13.4 million in annual revenue. In other words, $33.4 million was contributed to fleet and effort reduction. This resulted initially in 99 trawlers being removed and since then 150 have exited through the purchase of effort nights—a total reduction of the state’s trawling fleet from 750 to 500. In addition, 35 per cent of the reef area that was untrawled or lightly trawled was closed to Queensland fishers.

While the particular aims of the buyback were laudable, the implementation of it and the outcomes for the industry have been horrendous. At that time I brought the then environment minister, Senator Robert Hill, to Bundaberg to explain the position to the industry, especially to small trawler owners whose lives were already controlled by the vagaries of the weather and the times at which they could go to sea to fish. I had trawler owners in my own area drop from around 150 to 120 effort nights, making their businesses marginal or unviable. This in turn led to a sell-off of nights, which were procured by medium- and large-trawler owners and companies. So, contrary to the promises that they were given, the smaller operators were often forced out of the industry, which in turn had a profound effect on small processors. At recent meetings with the Minister for Environment and Heritage, Dr Kemp, one company operating out of Bundaberg, Fishmac, explained that they had gone from 33 trawlers supplying them to seven. The decline for Gladstone was even more dramatic, with one example of supplying trawlers dropping from 107 to 31. Quite clearly, what is at stake here is the livelihoods not only of fishermen, processors and their families but also of their permanent and extensive casual work force. Another effect was to burden the medium- and large-trawler owners with debts ranging from $300,000 to $3 million. Fishermen and their families accepted these debts, believing that the vast reduction in effort would mean that there would now be some sanity and certainty in the industry. They were told their fishery was now sustainable.

The entry of the GBRMPA’s RAP process into the equation, with what I believe are draconian closures, has moved the goalposts for these people yet again. Let me explain how this will happen in a more personal and localised way. In my electorate of Hinkler we have two fishing ports, Gladstone and Bundaberg. According to a study produced by the Cooperative Research Centre’s Reef Research Centre in 2001, there are around 300 commercial fishing businesses based in the Bundaberg area and around 131 in the Gladstone area. Obviously, this is no longer
the case. I am sure that many members of the House are familiar with the quality seafood which comes from these areas. These include the Prime Minister, who was presented with some local mudcrabs during a recent visit to Gladstone, Queensland’s Harbour City.

The seafood industry makes a significant contribution to my electorate and not just in terms of reputation. In dollar terms, the gross value of production for Bundaberg’s commercial fishing sector is around $37 million while Gladstone’s is $28.5 million. So we are looking at a sector worth $65 million in my electorate alone. Again, the CRC Reef Research Centre study shows that there are roughly 1,200 people within the Gladstone and Bundaberg areas who are directly employed in commercial fishing enterprises. These employees and their families inject upwards of $22 million directly into local business houses in Gladstone and Bundaberg which brings further jobs and prosperity to the region. In fact, commercial fishing families in my electorate spend around 90 per cent of their household incomes in the local area. This is quite obviously a dynamic, prosperity-producing industry within my electorate, but it is also an industry which can ill afford losses. Yes, we may need to increase the level of protection afforded to the reef, but does the income of our hard-working commercial fishermen deserve any less protection?

I have been meeting with fishermen, who have put their various proposals to state officials where the validity of their claims have been vindicated. Fishermen are not environmental vandals, because their livelihoods depend on them being practical and responsible and ensuring there are stocks for the future. They understand that a finite resource has to be husbanded. They realise that to retain the value of their capital they must have stock and certainty. These are precisely the points I put to the Prime Minister and Dr Kemp during their recent visits to Gladstone over the winter break. Meetings convened by the President of the Queensland Seafood Industries Association, John Olsen, and presentations by Duncan Souter, CEO of the same organisation, made it crystal clear that the over-confining of commercial fishing operations to small areas is tantamount to creating a self-fulfilling cycle of doom.

As the remaining areas are more heavily fished, arguments will then be mounted that they, too, are at risk, and again they will come under pressure from GBRMPA to close still more sectors of the Marine Park. QSIA president, John Olsen, has given his professional opinion that the direct impact of these eventualities would be felt in as little as one to two years after the introduction of the new zoning arrangements. One thing that must be recognised in this debate is that locking away great portions of the reef will not necessarily have a positive impact on the reef as a whole. By displacing fishermen to specifically designated areas, are we not increasing the pressure on those areas and, in turn, possibly endangering the ecological value of those areas?

So we are faced with the dilemma of balancing the competing needs of Queensland’s commercial fishing industry and all those who depend on it for their livelihoods with the urgency of saving the Great Barrier Reef from degradation. My colleague the minister for environment has flagged the possibility of revisiting the size and location of the proposed boundaries. I can assure the House that this would be greatly appreciated by Queensland’s commercial fishermen. When they retire, their vessels and their allocated nights are their superannuation. They want a future where their asset can be passed on to their children and their grandchildren.

This is a great industry. It deserves to be protected and the people of the fishing indus-
tries of Bundaberg and Gladstone and, more widely, of Rockhampton, Yeppoon and Hervey Bay, which make up the southern Great Barrier Reef trawl area, deserve to have their concerns heard. I appeal to the government to take these matters into account. There is great concern that when the submissions put to GBRMPA, which closed last week, are translated into a final plan they will go direct to cabinet. I believe that those plans should go back to the industry so that all fishermen can have a say in what happens to this important industry. It is vital for my area and it is an integral part of the reef. I repeat: fishermen are not vandals. They are some of the best conservationists there are. They want to have a future, they want to husband their resource and I for one support them to the hilt.

Aviation: Sydney (Kingsford Smith) Airport

Sydney Peace Prize

Mr LEO McLEAY (Watson) (6.26 p.m.)—The Sydney airport master plan was released last week. The master plan outlines a devastating scenario for the 800,000 people who live around Sydney airport. The major feature was the expectation of the airport’s owners that in the next 20 years there would be a threefold increase in passenger numbers and a doubling of the number of flights—that is, 68.3 million passengers on 412,000 planes per annum. What will this mean for my electorate of Watson? It will mean a lot of terrible things for them. It will mean an increase in the amount of traffic on the east-west runway. It will mean more curfew breaches. People are ring me up and telling me that planes are landing at Sydney airport on the east-west runway early in the morning. A friend of mine told me he arrived in Sydney a few weeks ago on a flight from Singapore at 5 a.m. This is before a curfew that is not supposed to end until 6 a.m.

We see a very well-publicised little stunt by the Airports Corporation in the newspaper on the weekend about how a Virgin Blue flight was sent back to Melbourne because it was 45 seconds over the curfew. That might have been one plane they sent back but airlines now schedule flights to break the curfew. The people of my electorate will pay for that. Life will be made unbearable for the people of Hurstville, Bardwell Park and Bexley North in particular. All those people who live along the ridge at Hurstville will have these planes coming in and taking off at an increased frequency. If you are going to double the number of flights and treble the number of passengers, that just means a lot of trouble for these people. It means a lot of unhealthy airport related diseases and it means that their lifestyles are significantly diminished.

What is the Prime Minister saying about all of this? According to the newspapers, he is saying that Sydney would probably never need a second airport and that technological change and larger aircraft would probably mean the city could survive with Sydney airport alone. That is like telling people that a 747 makes less noise than a biplane. I wonder what the Prime Minister meant by technological change? Perhaps this has shades of the old TV series Doctor Who. You know the bit I mean: the Tardis. The next thing we will see will be the Prime Minister and the former secretary of his department, Max Moore-Wilton, who now manages the Sydney Airports Corporation, getting their heads together over the sale of Telstra and all those telephone boxes. Sell Telstra to the Airports Corporation so that people can travel in telephone booths. So there you have it—the Tardis solution! Maybe that is what the Prime Minister means by technological change.

The Prime Minister and his mates in the Sydney Airport Corporation are wrong on
this issue. Technological change will not remove the need for a second Sydney airport, and bigger planes are not the answer either. The airport’s own scenario says that, regardless of bigger planes, there will be a doubling of the number of flights. There was some suggestion, attributed to the Prime Minister, that bigger planes, as well as carrying more passengers than smaller planes, were a lot quieter. Anyone who has experienced the noise made by larger planes could certainly refute that argument. What is desperately needed is a second airport for Sydney, not some naive suggestion that bigger planes will obviate the need for more airport provision or some wishful hope that future technological change will solve the problem.

So what do we need to do? It is quite simple really, and it can be done now and not at some vague future time when planes have enormous capacity and are quiet and when technological change, in the Prime Minister’s view, can work miracles. Firstly, we need to be realistic and accept the fact that Sydney needs a second airport. Secondly, we need to get consensus on a site for the second airport. There must be a bipartisan approach, both within the federal parliament and between the federal and New South Wales governments. A site needs to be identified as soon as possible and agreement reached by all concerned to ensure that that site is not encroached upon, as the Badgerys Creek site has been over the years since it was first proposed as an appropriate site for a second Sydney airport.

I first got elected to my local council in 1971 and the issue then was aircraft noise at Sydney airport. I got elected to this parliament in 1979 in a by-election and the one promise the then Leader of the Opposition, Bill Hayden, made was that Labor would build a second Sydney airport. This issue has gone on and on and on. What we need is a solution. We need to find a site for this airport and we need to find it now. We need to ensure that urban sprawl in Sydney does not overtake this site as it has overtaken the Badgerys Creek site. What we need in this whole argument is certainty—certainty for people in the west and certainty for people in the east. The 800,000 people who live around Sydney airport need that certainty and the people who live in the western suburbs need that certainty too. This should become an issue that governments agree on rather than point score on. We need to find a site, we need to get it right and we need to do it now.

I would also like to mention a second issue this evening, which is the awarding of the 2003 Sydney Peace Prize to Dr Hanan Ashrawi. Dr Ashrawi has been a tireless worker for peace in the Middle East. She has been an outspoken critic from within the Palestinian community, calling for reform of the Palestinian Authority, as well as being an outstanding spokesperson for the Palestinian community. She is highly intelligent, personable and very courageous.

Dr Ashrawi told the Sydney Morning Herald last week on 9 August that she was honoured to receive the prize. It was interesting that the naming of Dr Ashrawi as recipient of the prize had to be delayed because some people thought it was inappropriate. When she spoke to the Sydney Morning Herald she said:

In the Middle East and elsewhere an award for peace sends an important message. Women contribute to peace by sustaining life and making it meaningful. Women all over the world have to work against the forces of dehumanisation.

Peace has to be embedded in human rights and can never incorporate injustices and discrimination.

The Sydney Morning Herald article also reports comments made by Jeremy Jones, the
President of the Executive Council of Australian Jewry, and Stella Cornelius, a member of the peace foundation jury and of the Jewish community. Mr Jones is reported as saying that Dr Ashrawi had consistently opposed peace and accused her of being an old-style propagandist. According to the Sydney Morning Herald he also accused the foundation of being blinded by celebrity and said that the choice of Dr Ashrawi reflected badly on the prize whose previous winners included Archbishop Tutu and Mary Robinson. However, they seem to be very happy that Dr Ashrawi won. Mary Robinson said that she admired Dr Ashrawi’s commitment to seeking a just solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. She said of Dr Ashrawi:

She has the respect of the international human rights community for her condemnation of violence on all sides and for her work to achieve a just peace.

Archbishop Tutu said:

No one could be more deserving of this prestigious award. Against daunting odds she has remained committed to finding a peaceful solution to what seems an intractable problem.

But, significantly, Stella Cornelius said:

This is a choice which gives an opportunity for wider dialogue on peace and conflict resolutions, social justice and human rights. As such it is a good choice.

Mr Jones’s comments on this issue are in line with his regular attacks on members of parliament and others who give any support for the plight of the Palestinian people.

Mrs Irwin—Correct.

Mr LEO McLEAY—The attacks that have been made on my colleague the member for Fowler for her support of the Palestinian people have been disgraceful. It amazes me how intolerant Mr Jones and the pro-Israeli lobby can be. If you are not an enthusiastic supporter of the Sharon version of the Berlin Wall, you are considered to be anti-Jewish. When will the Jeremy Joneses of this world understand that criticism of the Israeli government and its actions is not anti-Semitism?

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Lindsay)—I remind the member for Fowler that she is not in her place in parliament.

Queensland: Redcliffe Rail Link

Ms GAMBARO (Petrie) (6.36 p.m.)—I want to highlight the Queensland government’s disgraceful treatment of the people of north Brisbane in abandoning its promised railway link, particularly to Redcliffe. This rail link—part of Queensland Transport’s own 25-year integrated transport plan, promised by two Labor governments and reiterated in the Transport 2007 review of 2000—is a long-promised, urgent requirement in Australia’s fastest growing urban growth corridor.

As recently as March last year, both Queensland’s transport minister and its environment minister gave a public assurance to the Courier-Mail on 12 March 2002 that the railway link would go ahead. Millions of taxpayer dollars were spent buying up land for the rail corridor. Millions more were spent on a feasibility study and an impact assessment for public scrutiny. In December 2001 the environment minister had already said that the rail link was almost at the point of construction. All that was needed was private sector partnership.

In March 2002, the transport minister was widely quoted in the media as saying that a number of ‘significant players’ in the construction industry had registered interest. He even elaborated that fares would match city train fares, unlike the privately operated airport rail link, and called it ‘a priority’ for Queensland Transport’s 2007 action plan. So convincing were these commitments that no less an authority than the Gregory’s road guide saw fit to include the rail link in their...
2003 edition. So convinced were the people that they bought land, built houses and opened businesses, and developers built estates like the newly opened North Lakes, where 25,000 people will eventually live, all requiring public transport and, notably, a rail link.

Was it merely mischief when the rail commuters started to hear regular test-run announcements of phantom stations along the doomed line? That is a disquieting thought for anyone unused to the ways of Queensland Transport. What a cruel reminder that what Queensland Transport giveth, Queensland Transport can taketh at the stroke of a pen. So unexpected was that stroke that even the government’s sitting state members were caught on the hop. Was it simply an oversight that the transport minister had forgotten to tell the local member for Redcliffe, and also the Speaker of the state parliament, before he made that doomed public announcement?

The poor fellow, the state member for Redcliffe, told one radio station—still shaking his head in disbelief, or was it anger?—that ‘no-one was more surprised’ than he, and he had ‘been taking the rail link to cabinet since 1999’. Poor man. Someone should have pointed out to him that he was a mere blip on the graph of a proposal that has been around since the 1800s—so long that it is up for inclusion in the ‘Guinness Book of Labor Election Promises’.

He was not the only one who was caught out. The state environment minister was so startled by his own government’s announcement that he doubted its accuracy. Thinking back, no doubt, to the government’s own agreed script and his own earlier assurances of ‘almost ready for construction’, he blamed the hoo-ha on a simple misunderstanding and, of course, what else but a media ‘beat-up’. ‘No, no, no,’ said the environment minister and member for Murrumba. He reassured everyone by saying, ‘Stay calm. It hasn’t been cancelled. It’s merely waiting for the right private investment partner, just as we’ve always said’—someone else the transport minister had obviously forgotten to tell.

The rebuttal that emerged from the transport minister’s office was positively Hobbesian: nasty, brutish and short, to say the least—‘negligible private investor interest; it’s definitely a no-go.’ The small fact that the environment minister’s own electorate lies in the middle of the proposed rail link route, like the route of his own political fortunes, must have been doubly dismaying for him. It was like telling the people of Redcliffe what you would tell a child, ‘There is no Santa Claus.’

This is not the end of the fight. People are outraged by the latest betrayal by Queensland Transport. They are outraged that 24 hours after the axing of the rail link, the Queensland Premier vetoed a hoped-for alternative to the rail link: the replacement for the dangerously inadequate, three-lane ‘tidal flow’ Houghton Highway bridge. The Houghton Highway is actually a state road and it is the scene of daily traffic chaos, regular horror smashes and malfunctioning electronic lane signals which regularly close down one of the three lanes, with heart-stopping results for motorists.

This situation has led me to launch a petition to the Queensland Premier, calling on him to reverse his decision to axe the rail link and to reconsider an upgrading of the Houghton Highway. This petition will be tabled in state parliament. Labor’s local state member may be ignored by his own government, but the people of Redcliffe and Petrie are not so easily brushed off. They are, with this petition, sending the message clearly to Mr Beattie themselves. Their response has been absolutely overwhelming. Across the
board, from all political persuasions, the people of Redcliffe and other suburbs that need this rail link are signing in their thousands. The local newspaper put the case quite eloquently, with a full-colour, front-page article with a banner headline reading: ‘No train, no bridge’. As far as Redcliffe is concerned it should have read: ‘No train, no bridge, no vote, Mr Beattie’.

Aviation: Brisbane Airport

Mr RUDD (Griffith) (6.42 p.m.)—I always find it entertaining when federal members from Queensland in this House, in campaigning for the next election, always seek to do so with their principal opponent being the state Labor government or the local state Labor member, as is the case with Ray Hollis, the very fine state member for Redcliffe. What the member for Petrie has not informed the people of her electorate or the people of Queensland, who may be listening to this broadcast, is that the promise for a rail link to Redcliffe existed throughout the duration, as I understand it, of the 32-year Bjelke-Peterson National Party government—although Bjelke-Peterson was not the Premier for that entire length of time—and we saw no action at all, as far as the construction of that rail link was concerned. Furthermore, when we look at the period of the Labor government since 1989, by and large it has been in office for not even one-third of that overall period. So I think we have a prime case of the pot calling the kettle black.

The general political strategy I find entirely entertaining is that, when you are confronted locally with the collapse of bulk-billing on the part of your local doctors in Petrie and the hike in HECS charges for working families trying to send their children to university from the electorate of Petrie, what do you campaign on but a state issue—namely a state issue concerning the rail link to the city of Redcliffe. Of course, the city of Redcliffe deserves maximum attention in terms of its public transport needs, and it is important that these needs be addressed in the period ahead.

The purpose of the grievance debate in which I am participating relates to Brisbane Airport. Brisbane Airport is a federal matter, unlike that which has just been canvassed by the federal member for Petrie. Airports legitimately generate passion. Why do they generate passion? Because they deal not just with property values but, more fundamentally, with quality of life. We see that in Sydney, in Brisbane and in other parts of Australia where airports radically affect local families.

In my part of Brisbane people spend a lot of money renovating their homes because we live in a city in a state that has a great climate. It is a city in a state where people do a lot of their living outdoors. People build verandas, they build decks and they spend a lot of their time out on those decks, enjoying life with their kids, their families and their friends. But all that becomes interrupted badly when you have the construction of local airports with inadequate attention to proper planning as far as the direction of flight paths and the impact of aircraft noise on people’s quality of life and their ability to enjoy the great outdoors are concerned. That certainly has been my experience, both as a resident of the southern suburbs of Brisbane and since being the federal member responsible for representing that part of Brisbane in this parliament.

Brisbane Airport is Australia’s second largest airport. It is an airport that has grown rapidly in recent years, and in time it will generate an increasing volume of tourists and other traffic, from South-East Asia and East Asia and from domestic tourism coming from the rest of Australia. The consequence
is that we have to live with and manage the difficulties that that volume imposes in terms of the quality of life of the residents who live in and around Brisbane Airport. For those who argue, ‘Buyer beware,’ I simply say this: the inner suburbs of Brisbane were populated well before the Wright brothers ever took off. The inner suburbs of Brisbane have seen residential developments in close, right near where subsequently—probably half a century later in fact—the Brisbane Airport site was first secured. To those who put the buyer beware argument, saying, ‘Do not build close to an airport,’ I simply say that, in the case of our airport in Brisbane, the suburbs of Bulimba, Hawthorn and Cannon Hill—as well as the suburbs on the north side of Brisbane—were settled well before the tarmac at Eagle Farm was laid down.

The Brisbane Airport Corporation some years ago advanced a master plan whereby they would seek to construct a parallel runway. In 1999 that master plan was approved by the federal government, through transport minister Anderson. The consequence of that would be to impose an additional aircraft noise burden on, we estimate, about 50,000 residents across Brisbane’s south side. Our principal complaint about the way in which that was done was that it did not properly address all the other runway options, through a properly conducted feasibility study. It simply delivered an outcome—the so-called western parallel runway.

What did our community do about it? Over the intervening several years we did three things. The first thing we did, of course, was object. We registered objections with the decision or the recommendation put forward by the Brisbane Airport Corporation. There were some 4,000 or so written objections by local residents, and in fact some 10,000 people have been in contact with my local electorate office in Morningside expressing their concerns about this particular runway development. The Brisbane Airport Corporation ignored those concerns expressed by the local community, recommended that this runway be approved, and—surprise, surprise—the federal Minister for Transport and Regional Services, Mr Anderson, subsequently approved it. That was back in February 1999.

What did we do as our second course of action? In 1999 we initiated a Senate inquiry. Between 1999 and 2000 a committee of the Senate investigated the adequacy of the consultation process embarked upon by the Brisbane Airport Corporation as part of its master plan process, specifically examining whether or not the Brisbane Airport master plan was completed in a manner compatible with the provisions of the Airports Act. What the committee found were significant deficiencies in the way in which that master plan process was executed by the Brisbane Airport Corporation—in particular the adequacy of its public consultation process as required under the specific provisions of the act. People often think that anyone opposed to a development laments the absence of consultation. At some level that is true, but if you examine the provisions of the Airports Act they are quite specific about the type, content and quality of consultation which is to be engaged in on the part of the project proponent with the local community, and that did not occur as far as the BAC in Brisbane was concerned.

We then engaged in our third course of action. Our third course of action began in 2000. On behalf of the local community I initiated a legal challenge against the Brisbane Airport Corporation in the Administrative Appeals Tribunal. The Airports Act provides for the tribunal to be the appropriate appellate body for major decisions taken under that act. Over the subsequent two years, I engaged in four rounds of legal action against, initially, the federal government for
its decision to approve the master plan. Subsequently, that action was joined by the Brisbane Airport Corporation, so that I ended up in court against the federal government on the one hand and the Brisbane Airport Corporation on the other. Their financial and legal resources were, shall we say, considerable; mine, by contrast, were minimal. I ended up taking the case myself before the AAT on two occasions, and I subsequently appealed to the Federal Court on two occasions.

The first two stages of the court process dealt with whether or not there had been what is called an expiration of time within which a properly considered appeal to the AAT could be considered. The reason there had been a delay in the mounting of that action was that we wished to investigate the adequacy of the consultation process engaged in by the BAC through the Senate inquiry first. That meant that there was a delay before we actually advanced this matter to the AAT. The AAT in the first instance said that an extension of time was permissible and I could advance my case. That matter was then appealed to the Federal Court, at which point I won that appeal as well.

We then went back to the court of the first instance, that being the AAT, where on this occasion the Brisbane Airport Corporation, having at this stage joined the action, decided to challenge whether or not I was a person affected by the decision to approve the Brisbane Airport Corporation master plan and therefore whether I had a case to bring as a person legitimately affected by the decision in question. This goes to the legal doctrine of standing—whether I had standing in the eyes of the court. The AAT once again upheld my side of the argument and found that I had standing to bring this case to the AAT, but on appeal to the Federal Court I lost that action, which brings us virtually to the present.

As a result of that not only did I lose that court case in the Federal Court against the Brisbane Airport Corporation but they subsequently sought to extract personal legal damages from me. Altogether the bill totalled some $32,000—$28,000 in court costs from the BAC, $1,100 for the engagement of cost assessors and $3,200 for the engagement of legal representation for the settlement of the dispute. In assisting in this the local aircraft noise movement, led by Jackie Cann of Ban Aircraft over Residential Brisbane, conducted a fundraiser recently and raised a total of some $39,000 from the entire community. My costs were therefore met by the local community, with the exception of a couple of thousand dollars which I had earlier met as part of my legal costs associated with the action.

This fight for justice for the local community in Brisbane on the question of aircraft noise and its impact on our local quality of life, our standard of living and our property values will continue, and I intend, so long as I have breath, to argue for the interests of my community, by whichever means I have available to me, to ensure that they are delivered justice in the time ahead.

Employment: People with Disabilities

Mr BARRESI (Deakin) (6.52 p.m.)—I welcome the opportunity to speak about one of the more emotive and concerning issues confronting any just, tolerant and compassionate society—that is, the issue of disability services and in particular the employment of disabled persons. There are many faces of this issue. The most important faces, however, are those of the disabled people searching to make a constructive contribution to society. This has been achieved time and time again through the various disability employment programs offered by a number of very worthy business services employers. One such organisation is Nadrasca, based in
Nunawading in my electorate. I pay tribute tonight to Nadrasca and its general manager, Frank Harris, for the work it does in the eastern suburbs of Melbourne and more particularly its contribution to the debate on disability services in Australia through its membership of ACROD and other organisations.

The emotion of this topic has run high for quite some time and was evident over the weekend at Kew, in Melbourne’s inner east, where a group of concerned parents, residents, family and friends stood in the parklands adjacent to Kew Cottages disabled care facility, which has been earmarked for private sale by the state government. One of the emotions that struck me particularly was the apparent misunderstanding of the plight of many disabled people. The misconception that because you are disabled you are now a burden to society is totally offensive and downright wrong. This is a group of people who crave as much as able-bodied Australians to be given every consideration to help them make a meaningful contribution to society. The alternative belief is damaging to a widely caring, compassionate society intent on breaking down barriers to discrimination.

I would like to draw on some of the key initiatives of the government in this area and reinforce the importance of providing real and tangible opportunities to disabled Australians. Furthermore, I would like to propose for inclusion in the debate on possible government responses to the challenges posed by an ageing disability population the US model known as the Javits-Wagner-O’Day program or JWOD—but more on that a little later on.

This year in the 2003-04 budget which was brought down by the Treasurer we saw in the area of disability services the introduction of a case based funding model. This model will be introduced for all disability employment services from 1 January 2005. Funding for disability employment assistance will increase by $135 million over four years with the implementation of this model. Disability business services’ reaction to the government’s case based funding model has been positive. They welcome the new employment places as an initiative that is well overdue. They recognise that case based funding will provide a fairer funding system providing equity for all.

Nadrasca have consistently had an average of 10 persons on their waiting list. They have now been successful in receiving funding to take on an additional five persons. Unfortunately the capacity to take on additional persons is principally limited by the business capacity to have sufficient work for increased numbers. The Javits-Wagner-O’Day program could ease the pressure felt by many of these business services organisations.

As part of the government’s response to the pressures, I understand the minister has called for a business services review, which I understand—although I am not totally certain—is being carried out under the auspices of Mr Nobby Clark. This review has adequately described the difficulty business services are currently being confronted with in the marketplace. The last 12 months have been the worst business activity period that businesses such as Nadrasca have seen in a decade. One of the outcomes has been the need for a thorough review of actual costs of running business services—the unseen costs of employing persons with a disability.

If it is not too late I would like to suggest that the chairman of the business services review go back through the departmental records and have a look at a report brought by a scoping task force which I headed up back in 1998. The scoping task force was called by the then Minister for Family Services, the Hon. Warwick Smith. The report
was presented to the minister in the closing days of the 1998 election. Unfortunately for the government and for members of the task force—individuals such as Ian Spicer, Mike Sumner from ACROD, and the general manager of Nadraska, which is in my electorate—the minister lost his seat in the 1998 elections and the momentum for change was lost with it. I have raised the matter with successors to the minister and I intend to bring it to the attention of the current Minister for Family and Community Services.

In the short time I have available I would like to give a very brief synopsis of the JWOD program, and the study that we conducted back in 1998 which is as relevant today as it was then. Certainly I know there are many in the sector who believe the need for action on an activity of this nature to assist disability employment activities would be very timely. Our report examined the feasibility of increasing employment opportunities for people with severe disabilities by streaming a percentage of government purchasing contracts to disability business services, as is done under federal legislation in the United States.

The US JWOD program was introduced in 1938-39 for those who had blind disabilities and extended in 1971 to those who were considered to be severely handicapped. It is also known as a President’s committee and reports directly to the President of the United States. I had an opportunity back in 1999 to visit the JWOD offices in Washington DC to get a first-hand appraisal of the program. The program requires government departments and agencies to purchase selected goods and services such as office supplies, janitorial and mailing services, gardening services and industrial products from non-profit organisations employing people with severe disabilities. This provides employment and training opportunities and also prepares many people with severe disabilities for jobs in the open labour market.

The purpose of our review was to assess the benefits and the costs of the program that was taking place in the United States and to assess its applicability in the Australian context. Of particular importance, in Australia we were looking at the opportunities for employment of people with severe disability, and their need for support. We also looked at the social policy framework, which promotes work rather than welfare; the current policies of government—and I am referring here to state governments as well as local governments—in relation to their purchasing of goods and services; the legislative framework of the Trade Practices Act and whether or not there are any legislative hindrances to introducing a model of this type under the TPA. Also, we looked at the extent of alignment between government purchasing requirements and the supply capacities of disability business services.

This program was not based on the government welfare handout mentality that is often attributed to programs of set-aside purchasing models. The organisations that fall under the JWOD system in the United States still have to meet very strict requirements for quality assurance and wages and employment conditions, and they receive full accreditation through NIB and NISH, the auspicing organisations, to make sure that they qualify.

Of course we also understood, through our review, that the environment in the United States differs very much from the environment in Australia in terms of possible government contracts. When you have one per cent of government contracts in the United States equalling $1 billion, that is a lot of money that can go into disability services. One per cent of possible government contracts in Australia would be significantly less
than that and of course very much limited to the major capital cities, unlike in the US, where departments such as the Department of Defense are located throughout the 50 states of the US. Our feasibility study did not invite public submissions, but we did do a thorough investigation of the issues. We consulted with ACROD in Western Australia in particular, where they were doing some exciting work. We met with a number of business service providers in South Australia, Queensland and Victoria.

Satisfying employment is widely accepted as a natural aspiration of most people of working age. Such employment not only provides income but also offers social and economic status, the fulfilment of personal ambition, the development of talents and the recognition of an independent, mature and contributing member of society. Regrettably, the workplace environment to provide or support access for people with disability to employment is poor; nevertheless the need is as important to that group of Australians as it is to others. I would urge the Minister for Family and Community Services and other members to acquaint themselves with this excellent program—the JWOD program. It is a way for us to relieve the financial pressure on the disability sector, particularly as the pressures of an ageing disability population will become even more severe in years to come.

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

That grievances be noted.

Question agreed to.

BILLS RETURNED FROM THE SENATE

The following bills were returned from the Senate without amendment or request:

- Industrial Chemicals (Notification and Assessment) Amendment Bill 2003
- Migration Legislation Amendment (Protected Information) Bill 2003
- Customs Amendment Bill (No. 1) 2003
- Customs Tariff Amendment Bill (No. 1) 2003
- Appropriation Bill (No. 1) 2003-2004
- Appropriation Bill (No. 2) 2003-2004
- Appropriation (Parliamentary Departments) Bill (No. 1) 2003-2004
- Product Stewardship (Oil) Legislation Amendment Bill (No. 1) 2003

ASSENT

Messages from the Administrator reported informing the House of assent to the following bills:

- Australian Prudential Regulation Authority Amendment Bill 2003
- Terrorism Insurance Bill 2003
- Criminal Code Amendment (Hizballah) Bill 2003
- Taxation Laws Amendment (Personal Income Tax Reduction) Bill 2003
- Health Care (Appropriation) Amendment Bill 2003
- Superannuation (Financial Assistance Funding) Levy Amendment Bill 2003
- Superannuation Industry (Supervision) Amendment Bill 2003
- Acts Interpretation Amendment (Court Procedures) Bill 2003
- Maritime Legislation Amendment (Prevention of Pollution from Ships) Bill 2003
- Intellectual Property Laws Amendment Bill 2003
- Murray-Darling Basin Amendment Bill 2003
- Energy Grants (Credits) Scheme Bill 2003
- Energy Grants (Credits) Scheme (Consequential Amendments) Bill 2003
- Appropriation Bill (No. 1) 2003-2004
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Appropriation Bill (No. 2) 2003-2004
Appropriation (Parliamentary Departments) Bill (No. 1) 2003-2004
Export Market Development Grants Amendment Bill 2003
Australian Film Commission Amendment Bill 2003
National Handgun Buyback Bill 2003
HIH Royal Commission (Transfer of Records) Bill 2003
Customs Amendment Bill (No. 1) 2003
Customs Tariff Amendment Bill (No. 1) 2003
Superannuation Legislation (Commonwealth Employment) Repeal and Amendment Bill 2002
Taxation Laws Amendment Bill (No. 2) 2003
Taxation Laws Amendment Bill (No. 4) 2003
Taxation Laws Amendment Bill (No. 6) 2003
Governor-General Amendment Bill 2003
Industrial Chemicals (Notification and Assessment) Amendment Bill 2003
Migration Legislation Amendment (Protected Information) Bill 2003
Workplace Relations Amendment (Protection for Emergency Management Volunteers) Bill 2003
National Health Amendment (Private Health Insurance Levies) Bill 2003
Private Health Insurance (ACAC Review Levy) Bill 2003
Private Health Insurance (Collapsed Organization Levy) Bill 2003
Private Health Insurance (Council Administration Levy) Bill 2003
Private Health Insurance (Reinsurance Trust Fund Levy) Bill 2003
Australian Security Intelligence Organisation Legislation Amendment (Terrorism) Bill 2003
Wheat Marketing Amendment Bill 2003

COMMITTEES
Native Title and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Land Fund Committee
Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee

Membership
The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Lindsay)—Mr Speaker has received advice from the Chief Opposition Whip nominating members to be members of certain committees.

Mrs GALLUS  (Hindmarsh—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Foreign Affairs) (7.04 p.m.)—by leave—I move:

That:
(1) Ms Gillard be discharged from the Joint Statutory Committee on Native Title and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Land Fund and that, in her place, Mr McMullan be appointed a member of the committee, and
(2) Mr Melham be discharged from the Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs and that, in his place, Mr McClelland be appointed a member of the committee.

Question agreed to.

HIGHER EDUCATION LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2003
Second Reading
Debate resumed from 26 June, on motion by Dr Nelson:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Ms MACKLIN (Jagajaga) (7.05 p.m.)—The Higher Education Legislation Amendment Bill 2003 amends the Higher Education Funding Act 1988 to provide funding for indexation for cost increases, and there are a number of other technical adjustments in the bill. It also amends the Australian Research Council Act 2001 to provide for a number of administrative changes. The opposition support the provisions for indexation of Commonwealth funding for universities in this
bill but, in doing so, make strong representations to the government that the level of indexation in this bill is certainly inadequate. Any of us who have anything to do with universities, whether because of our parliamentary responsibilities or because we have children attending university, would know that the government’s inadequate funding and the significant cuts to universities over the last seven years have led to overcrowding in lecture theatres, a very strong decline in staff morale and mounting threats to standards in our universities.

While we will support the provisions for indexation in this bill to at least give some additional funding to the universities, which is desperately needed, we call on the government to adopt Labor’s policy to put in place a proper process of indexation that would see the universities’ operating grants from the Commonwealth keep up with costs. Labor have announced that we would introduce a new index based on the wage cost education index developed by the Australian Bureau of Statistics within a composite index that would measure the real impact of price changes on university funding. This indexation of Labor’s would in fact lead to an increase in funding for our universities of over $312 million between 2004 and 2007, which is money that universities desperately need.

This bill also adjusts funding for universities to reflect various revised estimates. As I said, we will support these amendments but we call on the government to recognise the need for a much more generous index in the future. The bill also provides an additional $7 million for the rebuilding of the Australian National University’s Mount Stromlo Observatory. Of course everybody here would be aware that this follows the devastating effects at Mount Stromlo of the Canberra bushfires in January this year. We certainly recognise the world-class reputation in research in astronomy and astrophysics that the ANU has earned through the Mount Stromlo Observatory. There is no question that the loss of the Mount Stromlo Observatory was very significant not only for the ANU but also for the international research community. Its importance to Australian science is without question both here in Australia and also internationally.

The Australian National University is seeking to deal with three sets of complex issues relating to the loss of Mount Stromlo: firstly, the gap between the insurance payout and the cost of replacing the facilities; secondly, the replacement of heritage buildings; and, thirdly, the question of how to restore the internationally renowned research facility to its pre-bushfire research capacity. These are all critical issues for Australian science and for the university. The $7.3 million allocated in this bill is in fact far short of the $20 million needed by the university. I certainly hope the government will continue to hold discussions with the university to make sure the funding provided is adequate to replace this outstanding scientific resource.

The bill also provides for a number of sensible changes to update the Australian Research Council’s board and other administrative arrangements, and we will support those amendments. But there are concerns about the way the government proposes to manage the different categories of research funding, as set out at item 15 of the bill. As the government’s amendment bill stands, it seems as if the minister would have infinite discretion over funding for the various Australian Research Council programs. This could mean that funding levels could be set at zero or the sky could be the limit. In our view, a limit needs to be placed on the minister’s discretion, so we will be seeking the government’s agreement to limit this ministerial discretion.
At this point, I want to move a second reading amendment which goes in part to this issue. The second point of the amendment calls on the government to amend this bill so as to limit the degree of ministerial discretion over the division of funding between different categories of research programs. I hope that, in the time it takes for the bill to go from here to the Senate, we are able to get agreement with the government on this issue. 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

(1) condemns the Government for:

(a) the failure of its policies to tackle the real issues facing higher education in Australia, including in the following areas:

(i) the increasing financial burden its policies are placing on students and their families, and the related growth of student debt;

(ii) the continuing inability of universities to enrol qualified students who wish to take up a publicly-funded place;

(iii) the inadequate provision for growth in higher education, especially in the period 2004-2007;

(iv) the inadequate planning for meeting key areas of skill shortage through higher education, including teaching and nursing;

(v) inadequate indexation of university funding;

(vi) inattention to the links between higher education and TAFE;

(vii) a lack of focus on quality, innovation and global changes in higher education.

(b) underfunding the rebuilding of the Mt Stromlo observatory, and

(2) calls on the Government to amend the bill so as to limit the degree of Ministerial discretion over the division of funding between different categories of research programs”.

The first part of the second reading amendment goes to the significant problems that have been created in the higher education sector as a direct result of this government’s policies. There is no question anymore in anybody’s mind that our universities are in crisis as a direct result of the very significant budget cuts that universities have experienced since 1996. The cuts amount to $5 billion. These very significant cuts have resulted in a drop in public confidence in our universities, a very significant increase in student costs and, most significantly, unfair access based on how much students can pay rather than on merit.

As I said before, as a result of these cuts each and every one of our universities is struggling to perform at the highest possible standard. Students are sitting in the aisles in lecture theatres, infrastructure is in serious disrepair and there are insufficient resources. All of these things are becoming increasingly common in our universities. A survey of university teachers has found that standards are slipping. The academics surveyed certainly felt that degree standards had been ‘dumbed down’, and 45 per cent of academics said that the quality of contact with students had declined. That is not surprising, because when these massive cuts result in serious reductions in staff numbers it becomes very difficult for students to see staff.

Between 1996 and 2001 the number of students per teaching staff blew out by 22 per cent. In some institutions the increase has been as great as 70 per cent. There has been a very significant expansion in the number of students to whom teaching staff have to attend. This of course means a reduction in individual attention, fewer tutorials—in some places, students will tell you that tuto-
rials do not even exist anymore—and much bigger classes. All in all, this means compromised learning for people who want to go to university to extend their educational opportunities.

We also know from data from the Australian Vice-Chancellors Committee that about 20,000 people who have qualified for a university place miss out every year. Once again, this is the direct result of the Howard government not providing sufficient funding for our universities to create the places necessary for those students who are capable, qualified and motivated to undertake university research. So many Australians—both the young and, in some cases, the not so young—apply to study in areas where we are desperately short of people. These are students who want to go into teaching and nursing, where we know there are many vacancies for skilled professionals.

In a nutshell, the government is not only underfunding our universities and causing a crisis in the quality of education that is being provided; it is also actually stopping thousands—in fact, 20,000 Australians a year—from realising their potential and gaining the skills and education they need for a better job. This government is not providing enough university places. We also know what this government has done to students and their families when it comes to fee hikes. If we look at current proposals, we know—and one day we will see the legislation—that the government intends to allow universities to increase their HECS fees by up to 30 per cent. Already the University of Sydney has announced that it intends to put its fees up by the full 30 per cent. This will mean that at the University of Sydney an arts degree could cost $15,000, a science degree could cost $21,000 and a law degree could cost $41,000. That is what this government has done to university education in this country. Students will face these massive fees if they get a place at one of our universities. Of course, if a student wants to do a combined degree or an honours year they will have to pay even more.

The government, under its proposed changes, is also seeking to introduce loans for postgraduate students that would attract a real rate of interest of six per cent. We know that, as a result of the government’s changes in the last few years, the vast majority of postgraduate courses are now subject to full fees. The government is going to make it even more difficult for postgraduate students. Their loans will attract a real rate of interest on top of those full fees. I can give you an example of what this will mean in an area where we are desperate for people. If someone decides to be a midwife, for example—and we know that our hospitals are very short of a whole range of specialist nurses—that nurse would have to pay $4,300 in interest alone for the postgraduate diploma that he or she needs to practise as a midwife, and it would be similar for psychiatric nurses.

The fee hikes that came out in the budget actually mean that, since this government was elected, average student contributions have increased by 100 per cent. That is the reality of what this government has done to students over the last seven years. For some courses, like law or veterinary science, fees could increase by over 240 per cent. This is what this government has done and has in mind for students and their families. We are just starting to see the implications of this in reduced home ownership, reduced savings rates by young people, delayed parenthood and, in some cases, an increase in the brain drain. Many students are leaving the country to get away from their high student debts.

We now know the government is actually aware that cost will become—and, in fact, has already become—a barrier to university education. We know that because, although
the government has been sitting on some reports from the department, the reports were released at 5.30 p.m. last Friday. Obviously, the government was hoping that nobody would notice. In those reports, the research highlighted that we are already seeing young people and mature age students being deterred as a direct result of this government putting up fees for our university students over the last seven years.

One of the most inequitable changes that this government introduced in 1998 was that students could buy their way into universities. Instead of access to university for Australians being on the basis of how well you do in your exams, this government says that, if you have the money, you can buy a place at university. At the University of Sydney a full fee law degree costs $85,000. A full fee veterinary science degree costs $144,000 at the University of Queensland. At the University of Melbourne, the vice-chancellor has let the cat out of the bag by letting us know that he has priced a full fee medical degree at $150,000. So you can have a good laugh at how that will deter people from having children and buying a home.

The Howard government wants to increase the number of full fee paying places—this is the government’s policy. Half of all university places could go to people who buy their way in because they have the sort of money needed to buy a university degree. Under this government’s policy, more and more of our university places will be reserved for those who have the money and can afford to pay $100,000-plus for degrees. Labor believes that access to universities should be based on your achievements and potential, not on how much you can pay.

The other very dramatic thing that has happened under the Howard government has been a very significant reduction in public investment. At the same time that we have seen other nations increasing their public investment in universities, Australia has seen a decline. Our public investment in our universities is not just low by international standards; it has actually been falling while our competitor countries have increased their public investment. Those countries know that having more people going to university and more public investment in universities is good for economic growth and good for the country. Australia’s public investment in its universities declined by 12 per cent between 1995 and 1999, which is a bigger decline than in any other nation in the OECD. We are being left behind as a direct result of this government’s policies. Our competitors are going to reap the economic and social benefits of investing in tertiary education.

As a direct result of the government’s policies, the brain drain continues to worsen. Too many of our best brains are heading overseas because they cannot get the opportunities to continue their research and education in this country. One report has found that 61.5 per cent of academics surveyed had lost talented researchers to overseas universities in the last five years. A lack of secure employment, a lack of a career path, a lack of research support and a lack of jobs are all pushing our brightest young minds away from an academic career or away from Australia entirely. But it has not been limited to what has been going on in our universities. We have also seen in the most recent budget that the Howard government has no priority when it comes to increasing the level of resources needed for technical and further education.

A study done by the Productivity Commission shows that more Australians must attain higher skill levels if we are to raise living standards. We have a lot of skills shortages in a large range of industries. We know that skills growth has dropped as a driver of productivity. Yet again, we see
thousands and thousands of talented Australians, both young and not so young, being turned away from TAFE every year. Yet again, there is a waste of talent and, very importantly in this area, a lost opportunity to address the serious skills shortages that exist in this country.

The response of the Howard government to the mounting crisis in our universities is really one policy. It is about making students pay more—that is really the essence of it. Whether it is through increasing HECS payments or introducing more and more full fee paying students, what it amounts to is crippling debt for students and, for many people, increasing barriers to higher education because of that increase in debt.

Labor have put forward a very different policy indeed. We have a fundamentally different view of the roles and benefits of universities both to individuals and to our nation. First and foremost we see education—all forms of education—as an investment in the skills, knowledge and future employment of everyone in this country. We know that people with either TAFE or university qualifications are much more likely to get a good job and contribute to both social and economic development. That leads to a whole range of public benefits: higher living standards for individuals, a higher tax base, improved productivity, increased business investment and greater skills growth. We want to extend opportunities through having very significant differences in our policies compared with what the government has put forward.

Most importantly what we intend to do is to provide many more opportunities for people to go to university. We have announced that we will extend the places in universities by 20,000 additional new commencing places—a massive increase in opportunities for those people who are currently missing out on a place. Students will not have to pay full fees to get into university under Labor because there will be sufficient places provided. We will also extend the number of TAFE places by 20,000. We know that there are many students who are missing out. We want to make sure not only that they can get into TAFE and get the skills that they need as individuals but also that we can address the significant skills shortages in our industries. Those industries are as broad ranging as building and construction, child care, aged care and so on. We want to see a significant increase in opportunity for students at our universities and TAFEs. Specifically, we will allocate additional places to those areas in which we know we have significant shortages, particularly in the areas of teaching and nursing. We know how important it is to make sure we have enough skilled professionals in those areas.

We want to do more to address the disadvantages that so many young people face in getting into tertiary education, whether it is TAFE or university. Once again we have a policy that the government has not even dreamt of. We have announced a policy called Bright Futures, which is all about saying to young people, especially those from disadvantaged areas, ‘We will encourage you to go to university and to go to TAFE. We will see that the opportunities are there for you to extend your education. We will make sure that merit is the criterion for getting a university place. We will phase out the current full fee paying places for Australian undergraduates.’ Under Labor in the future there will be no full fee places for Australian undergraduates. We will certainly oppose the government’s plans to increase HECS. We will continue to oppose the deregulation of HECS. Under Labor there will not be any need for a loans scheme for full fee payers. We will certainly oppose the introduction of
a loans scheme for postgraduates with a six per cent interest rate.

We want to relieve the financial burden on students and new graduates. We will extend rent assistance to Austudy recipients and reduce the age of independence for students on youth allowance. We want to make it a bit easier for students when they finish their university degrees. We will not do what the government did when it first got in and dramatically reduce the HECS repayment threshold—that is, the income at which students start repaying their HECS debts. Labor will in fact increase the HECS repayment threshold to $35,000 per annum in 2004, giving new graduates a little relief when they first enter the work force.

We want to address significant skills shortages in the maths and science areas, so we have announced that we will reduce HECS fees for science and maths students by $1,600 per annum. That will be particularly important for those maths and science students who decide that they will go on to teaching. I certainly hope it will encourage them to do so. We have specific initiatives for students with disabilities and students from our Indigenous populations, because we know that they are not participating in higher education in the way that they should be.

Labor want to spend $2.34 billion on making sure that our universities and TAFEs are there for the students who are qualified and who are motivated to continue their education. We also know that we have to do more to increase the quality of, and the standards of excellence in, our universities. As part of our universities package we have announced a competitive $450 million fund to encourage the transition of our universities to 21st century learning institutions. We want to see our universities at the forefront of world-class research and teaching.

There is additional funding in what we have called a community engagement fund to make sure that regional and outer suburban universities are able to do what they do so well in their local communities. There is $150 million to improve teaching and learning. In a measure that has been very well received by our universities, and which is certainly pertinent to this bill, Labor have announced a new indexation measure for our universities, to deliver an additional $312 million, to make sure that universities can improve the quality of university education. We have also indicated a commitment to properly fund all university places at the full Commonwealth rate. We will not be doing what the Howard government has done over the last few years, which is to fund university places on the cheap. That is another reason why we have overcrowded classrooms and lecture theatres.

There are measures to improve quality and to protect standards in our universities. In other words, this package is a wide-ranging program of reform to increase opportunity, to make sure that we meet the demand from students for TAFE and university places and that we do so without increasing the debt that students have faced as a result of Howard government changes. We want to make sure our universities are once again places of excellence and that we fund them to deliver an outstanding, internationally competitive level of teaching and research. These are the changes that Labor are offering to students, their families, our universities and the staff in our universities. We know that as a result of this investment we will see significant benefits to individuals, industry and business through the improved level of skills in our community. We will also see economic growth for all of us.

We look forward to the government introducing its legislation. We certainly look forward to a very full debate on the two alterna-
tives. The government has put forward significantly different policies from those of Labor. We will not be supporting massive hikes in fees to students. We will not be supporting full fee places—that is, $100,000 degrees for Australian students. We will be making sure that students who are qualified and who want to go to university will get every opportunity to do so. That is Labor’s promise to the young people of Australia, and we look forward to their support.

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

Mr Edwards—I second the amendment.

Mr CIOBO (Moncrieff) (7.34 p.m.)—I cannot help but wonder to what extent the shadow minister for education, the member for Jagajaga, will go in a scaremongering campaign, in a poor attempt to feign indignation and to put concern into the hearts and minds of students in our tertiary education sector. I was particularly bemused to hear about some of the things that are flowing from the tertiary education sector in this country, according to the member for Jagajaga. Principal among them was the shadow minister’s claim that as a result of this government’s policy on tertiary education we are seeing people marry and have children later and we are seeing a huge upsurge in home prices. It was quite a revelation.

I cannot help but wonder whether it is also this government’s policy, according to the shadow minister, that is responsible for the same trends that have been occurring throughout the world. Perhaps the fact that Japan has a birthrate of about 1.2 per couple is a consequence of the Howard government’s tertiary education sector policy. It is absolutely absurd. It does the shadow minister no credit to come into this chamber and to make spurious comments along those lines. It does her no credit to try to link the population’s replacement birthrate, property prices and the general trend in the community for people to marry later to HECS and tertiary education fees. It is absolutely absurd—it is farcical. It ties in with the main thrust of the shadow minister’s speech.

In addition to that, it was disappointing to hear the shadow minister state on the record that Labor would be seeking to withdraw opportunities for full fee paying students who want to undertake tertiary studies. As someone who has had the privilege—and I stress the word ‘privilege’—to participate in both a fully private and a publicly funded tertiary education, I can say that truly great benefits flow from full fee paying students. What astounds me, though, is that the Labor Party can say to the Australian people, ‘We find it acceptable for overseas students to pay money to attend our universities, but we will deny an Australian child that basic right.’

An Australian adolescent’s right to study at university is purely dependent, according to the Labor Party, on the government’s ability to fund a place at a university. What an arbitrary measure. The fact is that requirements to get into public courses at universities are not solely determined on the basis of your marks at high school, for example, on the basis of your marks at TAFE or on the basis of work experience. It is also a function of demand for those places. In fact, the greatest impact on entrance requirements for a particular tertiary education course is the demand for that course. How can it possibly be equitable to say to people, ‘We as a government can only afford to fund several thousand places in this particular course of study. Let’s say the government can fund 5,000 places in this course. If you’re No. 5,001 and you have the same marks as the person who is No. 5,000, and you’re willing to pay for your place in university, sorry you can’t go. You can’t attend.’ That is the abso-
lute height of inequality, and it is a great travesty that the Labor Party would seek to revisit a failed policy from when it was in government.

Being denied the spot comes down to the fact that you are an Australian. If you were not an Australian and you were from overseas, you would be allowed to go, you would be allowed to pay and you would be allowed to study. If you are an Australian, do not think about it if the Labor Party comes to power. It is a disgrace and an insult to those young Australians who would recognise that, by funding their own study, very true and great possibilities and opportunities will flow to them. It is a disgrace that the Australian Labor Party would seek to deny that right to Australians who are willing to pay. It is a further disgrace that the shadow minister would generalise so broadly, saying the government’s policy was one of making those students ‘who could not make the grade buy their own way into university’. What a stereotypical statement from the shadow minister. It is a great shame that she should tar everyone with the same brush by making such an ill-considered statement.

In terms of the brain drain, which is another point the shadow minister made, I would like to make some introductory comments on that as well. I heard the shadow minister claim that it was the lack of jobs, the lack of career paths and the lack of research excellence that led to the brain drain in this country. As the youngest person in this chamber, 22 of my closest friends currently reside in the United Kingdom. All 22 of them have been through tertiary institutions.

Mr Rudd—Do you have any friends in this country?

Mr CIOBO—I still have many friends in this country, but I have 22 in particular that reside in London. Of those 22 that reside in London, I can honestly and sincerely say to the House that the principal reason they have gone abroad, if you want to bring it back to government policy, is taxation. It is due to the fact that the Labor Party absolutely enforces marginal tax rates that, compared to an international table of tax rates, are absolutely horrendous. The shadow minister should not come into this chamber and claim that it is a lack of research excellence, that is it is a lack of jobs or that it is a lack of a clear career path that is making young Australians leave this country.

Let us address the core issue. The core issue is high marginal tax rates, and the sooner we address that the better. The Howard government has made some strong inroads in terms of marginal tax rates, and it stands in stark contrast to the Australian Labor Party. I again suggest that the shadow minister have a close look at taxation rates and work with this government to try to reduce high marginal tax rates so that more young Australians, rather than having to pay nearly 50 cents in the dollar, do not go overseas where they can earn a decent income and not have to pay disproportionately high rates of income taxation.

Looking at it, the facts underscore the lie—rather, I should say, the misstatement—in the shadow minister’s comments, particularly in regard to research and development expenditure. The fact is that from 1998 to 2000—I endeavoured to find a more recent figure but was unable to—research and development expenditure in the tertiary education sector was increased by nine per cent to $2.8 billion. There has not been a fall in research and development expenditure. All of these reasons, particularly the research excellence reason as put forward by the shadow minister, seem to be untrue. There have been very substantial increases in research and development expenditure in the tertiary education sector.
I made those comments by way of introduction prior to discussing in more detail the bill that is before the chamber today. The specific purpose of the Higher Education Legislation Amendment Bill 2003 is to amend the Higher Education Funding Act 1998 and the Australian Research Council Act 2001. It sets in place new grant levels to reflect indexation and other technical adjustments contained within these bills, as well as to make administrative and technical amendments to the Australian Research Council Act. I noted the shadow minister’s claim, in regard to the indexation of grants, that it was Labor Party policy to adopt a wage-cost index model when determining funding grants for universities. At the moment, the model incorporates the cost adjustment factor. The cost adjustment factor is notionally split: 75 per cent being based upon the safety net adjustment and 25 per cent being based upon CPI. That 75 per cent figure is in fact a link to the Australian Industrial Relations Commission and effectively incorporates increases in salary costs to institutions. The 25 per cent figure reflects non-wage costs that may increase with regard to institutions.

I know the Labor Party stated that it would seek to adopt a wage cost index, which is in fact put out by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, and that, if that were the measure adopted, there would be an additional $312 million provided to universities. But I cannot help but wonder why the ALP would trumpet such an amount because under the Howard government—and in particular under the Minister for Education, Science and Training, the Hon. Dr Brendan Nelson’s reforms to the tertiary education sector—there will be an additional $1.5 billion allocated to the sector over the next four years. The shadow minister stands up in the chamber and trumpets that, if this wage cost index measure were adopted, there would be an additional $312 million in grants being provided to universities. But my response is, so what? So what, when this government is seeking to provide an additional $1.5 billion over the next four years and in fact additional expenditure will total $10 billion over the next 10 years. That is real money going into what is a very important sector in Australia’s social framework.

In terms of other initiatives this government has taken, I am very pleased by the fact that as a government we have supported additional Commonwealth student places. We have provided more funding for those people who are Commonwealth supported students. We have provided more funding to regional universities. We have placed greater emphasis on and put more funding into teaching excellence within our universities. We have already addressed issues such as national priority areas in nursing and teaching, for example. These are very positive and very real steps forward that the Howard government is already taking to ensure that Australia’s tertiary education sector is and will continue to be one of the greatest in the world. It is a great shame that the shadow minister would come in and talk down the tertiary education sector. It is a great shame that the contribution from the shadow minister is to say how our universities are in crisis. I have to say, having heard the shadow minister’s comments, that I was wondering whether in fact the most appallingly disadvantaged in our entire community are those students who have just completed their undergraduate studies. It would seem, based on the shadow minister’s comments, that those students must be among the most disadvantaged in the Australian economy.

As well, in terms of total funding for education this government has unashamedly pursued a path that does not make universities solely dependent upon government. We have said to them, ‘Seek out opportunities to
raise revenue yourselves. Provide new ways and take new initiatives that can provide institutions with new revenue streams and increased revenue streams. The proof is in the pudding, with some $2.7 billion in additional money in real terms flowing to the tertiary sector since 1995. I also heard the member for Jagajaga refer to how this government’s policies were leading to greater inequities in terms of access for students. Notwithstanding the arguments that I have already put forward to this House with regard to the fact that the Australian Labor Party would seek to deny Australian students who can afford to pay the right to go to university, if you look again at the facts you see that student numbers are up by 75,000 to 498,000 student places. They are domestic student places—Australian students studying in Australian universities—that are up by 75,000. Especially pertinent with regard to this bill as well is the fact that there is an additional $740 million being provided in funding to the Australian Research Council. Over a five-year period this will represent a doubling of the ARC’s ability to fund grants through the competitive grants program.

The fact is that this government has made great inroads in improving the standards of tertiary education and providing increased access for students from various equity backgrounds. The number of rural and isolated students accessing higher education places has increased by 9,658. The number of Indigenous students accessing places has increased by over 700. The number of students from low SES backgrounds has increased by more than 10,000 since 1995. The number of students with a disability has also increased significantly. It all begs the question how this universities in crisis speech we heard from the shadow minister rests when it does not seem to reflect the facts. When you actually look at student places and at the number of students studying and at the backgrounds of the students studying, you see that very many of them are now studying in universities and that they would not have had such opportunities under a shackled tertiary education student system, a shackled system that was bound to how much money the government was able to put in.

Another key reform of this government has been the introduction of the PELS system. For residents on the Gold Coast this has been a very important initiative, particularly for those students who choose to study at Bond University, an unashamedly private university on Australia’s Gold Coast. This government extended the Postgraduate Education Loan Scheme to students who wished to study at Bond, thereby making it more affordable for them to attend a private institution and to seek out opportunities in a private institution. Additionally, recognising the fact that education is one of the biggest services exports for this country—in fact our third biggest, worth some $4.2 billion—this government has sought to promote export opportunities for education. This is particularly evident on the Gold Coast, where for Griffith University, to the north, there are many hundreds of Norwegian students and for Bond University, in the southern part of the Gold Coast, there are many hundreds of students from the United States. A key component of this was an additional $100,000 that the Gold Coast Regional Area Consultative Committee provided to manufacture and put together brochures to attract students to come and study in Australia. I particularly would like to congratulate Sir Frank Moore and the Gold Coast Regional Area Consultative Committee’s CEO, Annie Norton-Knight, and its Chairman, Brian Gazman, on the successful allocation of funding for this initiative.

Most recently, I was also delighted that this government provided 50 places for a new medical school on the Gold Coast. This
will also address some of the issues with regard to the availability of doctors that exist on the Gold Coast. These last few instances are, on a localised level, very real ways in which this government is directly assisting the tertiary education sector. When I heard the shadow minister’s comments about the Labor Party’s proposed policy initiatives with regard to the tertiary education sector, I was concerned. When I hear the shadow minister make reference to the fact that it is a stark choice between the Labor Party’s education policy and the Howard government’s education policy, I do agree with her; it is a stark choice. But the choice is a very clear one because the Howard government is providing real funding increases across a range of areas.

The Labor Party is still bound to an old tertiary education model, which incorporates, for example, compulsory student unionism that would deny students the most basic right to choose whether they want to be part of a union or not. The Labor Party refuses to give them choice in the same way the Labor Party would refuse to give Australians access to universities on a fee-paying basis, even though they would provide that same right to foreign students. This is a good bill and it is in stark contrast to Labor Party policy.

Mr RUDD (Griffith)  (7.54 p.m.)—Why are we concerned about higher education? Why are we debating these questions with some passion and, hopefully from time to time, with some reason? I would advance two underlying factors which drive us in this direction. The first is that higher education provides opportunity, ideally, for all kids of ability. Therefore, it is a fundamental tool of equity. The second reason is that higher education, equally, is a fundamental driver of the national economy. National economies with vibrant higher education sectors, be they in the sciences or the humanities, are invariably the most efficient across the OECD, not just because they release to those economies a pool of highly skilled human capital but because universities in themselves, particularly in the sciences, become drivers of economic activity in their own right—through the new sciences, through information technology, through biotechnology and through the new frontiers of the new economy.

Therefore, there can be no more important debate than that which we are having in this parliament tonight on higher education and the Higher Education Legislation Amendment Bill 2003. Higher education is the engine room of equity. It is the engine room of the economy because it is also the engine room of ideas. Australia needs a world-class university system. When it comes to this question of a world-class university system, the gap between the ideal and the reality is, in fact, a chasm. Professor Alan Gilbert of the University of Melbourne recently wrote: The gap between the best universities in Australia and the best universities in the world is large. On any commonly adduced international measure of academic standing, the best universities in Australia are not among the world’s top 75 universities, and probably not among the top 100. They have quality researchers, but few nodes of research activity able to build the ‘critical mass’ research teams necessary to survive the loss of a few key individuals.

The impact of a table presented not long ago by the US magazine, US News and World Report, examining the characteristics of the top US doctoral-granting universities is remarkable. This table looks at Princeton, Harvard, Yale, the California Institute of Technology, MIT, Stanford, Pennsylvania State, Duke, Columbia, Dartmouth College and the University of Chicago. What is stunning is that when you go through these universities the level of funding per student is remarkable by any standard in this country. The top US universities for which data are readily available are funded at a rate between...
$US100,000 and $US150,000 per student, compared with $15,000 to $50,000 per
equivalent full-time student unit at the Group
of Eight—that is, the group of the most elite
Australian universities of Adelaide, ANU,
Melbourne, Monash, Queensland, Sydney,
University of the New South Wales and the
University of Western Australia. So the most
obvious challenge which is alive in establish-
ing a world-class university in Australia is
plainly financial. Let us take the easiest case:
the Australian National University. Research
done by Griffith University says:
... it would take an extra $AU1.2 billion per an-
um for the ANU to achieve recurrent funding at
the rate of $AU176,707 per EFTSU, and an extra
$AU6 billion per annum—
just a little under the Commonwealth’s total
higher education funding—
would be needed to fund the University of Mel-
bourne at the rate of the top US universities.

If we were to look at a comparison which
was alive, say, for the University of Mel-
bourne, one which has been hit upon in lit-
erature is an American university which is
not in the top 10 but is, in fact, the 25th
ranked US university—that is, the University
of Michigan. Again, it was listed in that table
I referred to before in US News and World
Report. The University of Michigan at Ann
Arbor has some 25,000 undergraduate stu-
dents and 13,000 postgraduate students. It is
similar in size to the University of Mel-
bourne, which has approximately 27,000
undergrads and 10,000 postgrads. The uni-
versities have similar numbers of casual aca-
demic staff, at about 450 each. However,
Michigan has significantly more full-time
academic staff than Melbourne—3,408 in
Michigan’s case compared with 2,164 as far
as the University of Melbourne is concerned.

Some 42.5 per cent of the University of
Michigan’s revenue was from government—a point which I think the
member for Parramatta should bear in mind
when making his next set of interjections in
this debate. Some 28.6 per cent of the Uni-
versity of Michigan’s revenue is from stu-
dent fees, which again is only slightly more
than the 20 per cent of the University of
Melbourne’s. But there is a considerable dif-
ference in the level of resources of the two
institutions. The University of Michigan has
revenues 3.7 times more than those of the
University of Melbourne’s. The total revenue
of the University of Michigan—this is in US
dollars—is $1.6 billion and the University of
Melbourne’s is $450 million. Revenue from
government for the University of Michigan
is $716 million compared with $224 million
for the University of Melbourne. Revenue
from fees is $480 million in the case of the
University of Michigan and $90 million in
the case of the University of Melbourne.
Revenue from other sources, including
grants et cetera, is $445 million versus $136
million.

On the government comparison alone,
however, there is a ratio of about three to
one. Something which our political oppo-
nents in this place never address in the macro
debate on the future of higher education is
that in the future it all lies in private sources
of capital. They never address the fact that
the fundamental driver in the US public uni-
versity system and private university system
lies in the provision of public investment.
The Business Council in its study in 2002
drew this conclusion from the gap in re-
sources between the University of Michigan
and the University of Melbourne. It said:
Given the presence of at least some correlation
between financial resource levels and perform-
ance, this revenue gap suggests that resourcing a
top generalist university will represent a signifi-
cant funding challenge in the Australian context.
Perhaps a focus on having a number of world-
class centres of excellence in particular disci-
plines within individual universities may be a more appropriate goal.

The purpose of that series of extracts is to demonstrate the dimensions of the challenge which lies ahead of this country if we are to have a world-class university system in the knowledge economy. The knowledge economy will be the central driver of the world economy in the century which lies ahead of us. When we look at the particular challenges which lie now within Australia, the dimensions of the task faced by government are truly enormous, particularly the dimensions of the crisis which now affects our university sector as a consequence of policies recently adopted by this government.

The government has slashed funding by $5 billion to Australian universities since it has been in office. Each year there are 20,000 qualified Australians who miss out on studying at a university and up to 15,000 young Australians miss out on a TAFE place because there simply are not enough places. Since 1996 there are 20,000 fewer fully funded student places in our universities and growth in TAFE places has all but stalled. The Howard government will not fund any new TAFE places under its current budgetary projections.

So, under these circumstances, who is picking up the financial pressure within the system? The first impact as far as financial pressure is concerned lies with the students themselves. The Howard government wants to let universities increase HECS fees by 30 per cent—that means HECS fees of up to $50,000 in the case of certain university disciplines. An arts degree would cost $15,000; a science degree, $21,000; and a law degree, $41,000. Under the Howard government’s proposed changes, loans for postgraduate courses would attract a real interest rate of six per cent. A specialist nursing degree could cost up to $4,300 in interest alone. New fee hikes could see average student contributions increase by more than 100 per cent since 1996. Some courses like law and vet science could increase by over 240 per cent.

The impact here is significant, particularly when we look at the cost of higher education in this country relative to other OECD economies. A table which compares the international study costs by level of independence of the student concerned—that is, whether they are living with parents, living in a dormitory or shared accommodation, or living as an independent adult—further underlines this point. I refer to a table prepared by the International Comparative Higher Education Finance and Accessibility Project. It demonstrates that for low independent students—that is, for those living with their parents—Australia comes in at fourth out of 13 in terms of the degree of real expense to be borne by students undertaking a higher education in Australia relative to Hong Kong, the US, Japan—Tokyo and Osaka—the Netherlands, Singapore, New Zealand, the UK, Austria, Germany, France and Norway. For those students with a moderate degree of independence—that is, those living in shared accommodation—we come in as the third most expensive venue on that table. And for those with a high degree of independence—that is, those living independently—we come in as the second most expensive venue for obtaining a higher education. These are not our statistics. These are the statistics provided by the International Comparative Higher Education Finance and Accessibility Project. Its website is www.gse.buffalo.edu/org/IntHigherEdFinance for those who are listening who may be interested.

Of course, that is not the only place where the financial gap is being met. There is a further one as well, and that lies in the government’s proposal to create a system where money more than marks opens university
doors, as the shadow minister for education noted in her recent policy release. Under this proposal, at the University of Sydney a full fee law degree would cost $85,000; at the University of Queensland a full fee vet science degree, $144,000; and the Vice-Chancellor of Melbourne University has priced a full fee medical degree at $150,000. The Howard government wants to increase the number of full fee paying places so that half of all university places would go to people who buy their way in, presumably including at the James Cook University in Townsville.

Funding pressures have to be met elsewhere in the system as well, given the overall withdrawal of net funds from the higher education sector under the Howard government. Over the last eight years we have seen $5 billion taken from our universities. We have seen individual universities losing between $20 million and $340 million in their federal funding. We have seen overcrowded classrooms, infrastructure in serious disrepair and insufficient student resources; they are all a problem across our university system.

If I could add a personal note at this point, my own daughter, who is studying at a university in Brisbane, told me recently that as part of her regular course the university, because of funding constraints, has had to reduce the tutorials associated with her university degree by one tutorial unit per week. The extent to which that is happening right across the country at the moment I think would be of concern to all parents and all students listening to the parliamentary broadcast this evening.

Of course, there is a further impact on the quality of the university courses being delivered. Fifty-four per cent of academics surveyed in Australia felt that degree standards have been dumbed down, 45 per cent said the quality of contact with students has declined, and the number of students per teaching staff has blown out by 22 per cent—at some institutions the increase has been as much as 70 per cent. We have all heard the anecdotal stories of students having to sit on the stairs and in the aisles of lecture theatres. None of this has been plucked out of the air; it is all borne out by the statistical data.

I turn to the independent study of the higher education review, stage 2, prepared by the Phillips Curran consulting firm in June 2003—the most recent analysis. It demonstrates that if you look at the overall components of university revenue by source from 1995 to 2001 and at where the shift has occurred, Commonwealth sourced funding to the university sector has declined by 9.9 per cent; HECS contribution to overall university revenue by source has increased by 70.5 per cent; fees have contributed to overall university revenue by 99.3 per cent; state governments have increased their allocation to universities by 49 per cent—its remarkable, given that universities are exclusively a Commonwealth function, at least since the higher education reforms in 1974—and other funding is up from 1.5 per cent in 1995 to 14.1 per cent. I am uncertain where foreign fee paying students fit in that table. I suspect it is probably the third category I mentioned, which in this table is simply referred to as ‘fees’.

Overall, you see the plain pattern of a transfer of financial responsibility from government on the one hand, where we have seen virtually a 10 per cent collapse in Commonwealth allocations to universities’ total revenue, and by contrast an increase in privately sourced finance for universities—a plain shift in responsibility. For those who think this has happened by osmosis, it has not. It is a product of a general philosophy of government which we see alive in the education sector and in the higher education sector, as well as in hospitals, in bulk-billing and in
the attitude to Medicare. It is a consistent policy and philosophy on the part of the government.

We, however, do not propose to sustain this. Labor’s policy has been released by the shadow minister and it indicates that we will be injecting a total of $2.34 billion into higher education over a four-year period. We intend to expand the opportunities for Australian young people to get a TAFE or university education, create 21,660 new full- or part-time commencing university places by 2008 and 20,000 new full- and part-time commencing TAFE places by 2008, and provide $35 million to support secondary school students from disadvantaged backgrounds to progress to university or TAFE. We also propose to ensure fair access to affordable tertiary education, with no increase to the Higher Education Contribution Scheme—HECS—no deregulation of HECS fees and no introduction of a real rate of interest on loans for postgraduate courses, and to abolish full fees for all new domestic undergraduate courses.

In terms of lifestyle affordability for students, we propose to extend rent assistance to Austudy recipients, reduce the age of independence for students on youth allowance to 24 in 2005 and 23 in 2007, and increase the HECS repayment threshold to $35,000 per annum in 2004. We also intend to address the national skills shortage by reducing HECS fees for science and maths students by $1,600 per annum, by funding an additional 3,000-plus full- and part-time undergraduate nursing places by 2008, by creating 500 additional new full-time HECS funded postgraduate teacher education places in areas of specialisation and professional development from the year 2005 onwards.

We regard these as important measures to deal with the practical problems which families and students face across the country. We also intend to provide a vision for investment and direction for a diverse, world-class Australian university system by establishing a competitive $450 million fund to encourage universities’ transition to 21st century learning institutions, a $150 million community engagement fund to support regional, rural and outer suburban universities’ leadership role in local communities, and a $150 million teaching and learning fund to recognise and reward teaching and learning excellence, including the provision of support for new university teachers.

These are the sorts of practical measures which we require not just for families and not just for individual students—these are the sorts of measures that we require for the country. Unless we seize by the throat this problem of the rundown in investment in our universities from the public sector, and unless we resolve as a country to create a world-class university system, we as a country and as an economy, as we approach and move our way through the 21st century, will have no foundation for our future. To kill this system, as is occurring at present, is frankly to kill the goose that lays the golden egg. We as a country must resolve instead to build a system based on our resources, our political commitment and our energies. (Time expired)

Mr LINDSAY (Herbert) (8.14 p.m.)—My lifelong experience tells me that there are always two sides to every question. Tonight’s debate on the Higher Education Legislation Amendment Bill 2003 graphically illustrates that particular philosophy. Those listening to
the debate tonight might listen to the Labor Party and be impressed with what is being put up but, as I say, there are always two sides to every question.

I heard the member for Griffith articulate Labor’s policies. He announced that there will be 20,000 new university places. That sounds terrific. Later in his speech, of course, he announced that the facility to allow for full fee paying domestic students will be abolished. I wonder where they are going to go, if they are going to go to university: of course, they are going to take up a goodly majority of the 20,000 new places. So the claim by Labor that they will provide 20,000 new places is just hollow.

In the amendment that has been moved to this bill tonight, the Labor Party condemns the government for the failure of its policies to tackle the real issues facing Australian higher education. Goodness gracious me: the Minister for Education, Science and Training has gone through the most thorough review of higher education in years. In a visionary plan, the minister has looked ahead for the next decade. The minister has grasped the need for reform in the higher education sector, and his philosophy has been based on two facts that cannot be denied. One is the fact that Australian universities need longer term access to more resources and the other is that money is only half the problem.

Let me tell you what the Australian Labor Party is doing and relate it to James Cook University in North Queensland. The people at James Cook University are currently of the view that they strongly support the government’s higher education reform package. Here is a regional university that has come out quite publicly and unashamedly and said, ‘We strongly support the government’s higher education reform package.’ That is a university supporting the Howard government. The people who are practitioners are supporting the Howard government. I was talking to the people at James Cook University last week, and what they said to me was: ‘It is terrific that this new package is available to us. If it is delivered, it is going to mean a quantum leap forward for this university, but we don’t think it is going to be delivered.’ I said, ‘Why don’t you think it is going to be delivered?’ Their response was that they were of the view that the Australian Labor Party would, in the Senate, vote down the most far-sighted reform package.

Do you know what they are doing at James Cook University, Mr Deputy Speaker? They are budgeting for the coming year on the assumption that the package will be voted down. Do you know what that means? It means that they are budgeting for mediocrity. At James Cook University, one of Australia’s most significant regional universities, they are budgeting for mediocrity because they believe that the Australian Labor Party is going to vote down the new changes in the Senate and the university’s access to the support it needs is going to be denied. That is appalling. It is something that I absolutely utterly reject.

In her contribution to the debate tonight, the opposition shadow minister said that universities are in crisis. James Cook University is not in crisis. James Cook University faces an extraordinarily bright future under the government’s higher education reform package. The people at James Cook University know it, and they are prepared to say so very publicly. But universities will be in crisis if the Australian Labor Party votes down this much needed reform package in the Australian Senate.

Another point that I hear the Australian Labor Party continually trot out in their mantra relates to the increase in HECS fees. The view seems to be that students should not pay HECS fees, despite the fact that the La-
bor Party introduced the concept of HECS fees. What the Labor Party do not seem to understand or accept is that HECS is the cheapest and the best loan that you could ever get in your life. And you do not have to pay for it up front. There is no impact on the student or the student’s family. You can pay when you have the capacity to repay. I utterly reject the notion that the Labor Party seem to put about that those who have the opportunity to go to university—and then have the opportunity to earn significantly more than those who do not have the opportunity to go to university—should be paid for by those 70 per cent of Australian taxpayers who have never had the opportunity to go to university. That is plainly unfair.

It is right, it is proper and it is good public policy to ask students who are going to benefit from a public education to ultimately pay some of the cost of that education. That is what the Labor Party originally supported, and that is what the Howard government certainly supports.

I was very interested in the Labor Party’s education policy, which was released recently, because it simply denies universities the flexibility they have been asking for. Why tie the hands of universities when there are real benefits to be gained by providing the flexibility that the Howard government’s higher education reform package has delivered? I was extraordinarily surprised at the dismissiveness in the Labor Party’s policy of the need to reform governance arrangements. Do you know what happens at James Cook University in Townsville? There is a council of about 36. The Vice-Chancellor, who is tasked with running the university, finds that the council, instead of involving itself in policy, involves itself in day-to-day management issues, and the CEO of the university finds himself unable to fulfil that role properly. That has got to change. There have to be proper, businesslike governance arrangements for all Australian universities.

What about Labor’s decision to deny students who want to take up the opportunity of a full fee paying place? But in the same breath Labor says it is okay for overseas students to take up that opportunity. Why would Labor discriminate against Australians? That is what it is: plain discrimination. Labor says overseas students can have a full fee paying place but Australians cannot. Surely that is a contradiction in terms. I think that those listening to this debate tonight will understand that. Labor, as ever, in this particular debate has taken up the soft option of just reaching for the public chequebook. It has been a hallmark of the Howard government that it has been prepared to do things that are right, even if they are hard. In relation to the higher education reform package, Our Universities: Backing Australia’s Future, the Howard government is prepared to take the hard decisions.

In the higher education package I was of course very pleased to see James Cook University get a huge boost: an additional $122.6 million over four years was provided to support students at regional campuses in the higher education sector across Australia. There is an additional loading incorporated into the new Commonwealth grants scheme, and that was to be allocated according to the campus’s size and its regionality. James Cook University gets an additional 7½ per cent over and above what it would normally expect to get. They are huge dollars for James Cook. There is an estimated $6.9 billion in additional funding for the sector and approximately $3.7 billion in financial assistance to students through new student loans. Regional universities and students will also benefit from the new Commonwealth learning scholarships, the Commonwealth accommodation scholarships and the Commonwealth education cost scholarships—
terrific initiatives that benefit universities in regional Australia.

But how shocked was I when I learnt that Queensland universities were to be $43 million worse off under Labor’s new policy? How was that? There was a black hole in their calculations. That was confirmed by the Commonwealth Department of Education, Science and Training and verified by the Commonwealth department of finance. What happened was that in Labor’s claim that they would reorder the HECS for maths and science from band 2 to band 1 there was a massive calculation failure. What that means in Townsville is that, if Labor ever implemented this policy, James Cook University would lose nearly $5 million over three years—an amount of money that university could not afford to lose.

I strongly back the initiatives of Dr Brendan Nelson. He will go down in history as being a very farsighted minister for education. The work that he has put into the higher education reform policy has been magnificent, and I encourage the Labor Party please not to vote down these much-needed initiatives in the Senate. I appeal to the Australian Labor Party to please pass the government’s legislation through the Senate for the sake of our universities, for the sake of our students and for the sake of James Cook University.

Mr MOSSFIELD (Greenway) (8.27 p.m.)—I rise to speak on the Higher Education Legislation Amendment Bill 2003 and to support the amendment moved by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, the member for Jagajaga. This bill amends the Higher Education Funding Act 1988 and the Australian Research Council Act 2001 to set new grant levels that will reflect indexation increases and make other technical amendments. As members will be aware and as the Bills Digest points out, the major source of Commonwealth funds for higher education are part 2.2 of the Higher Education Funding Act, HEFA, which provides grants to universities, and the Australian Research Council Act, ARCA, which funds research grant assistance. Both acts are amended annually to adjust for movement in prices, and that is what this bill seeks to do.

However, I wish to address my remarks to the amendment that has been moved by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, but before doing so I want to comment on some of the remarks that the member for Moncrieff made in his contribution, which I was able to listen to. He was critical of the fact that the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, the member for Jagajaga, indicated in her speech that the cost of education and the repayments of HECS would have an impact on how low-income people or people on medium incomes would plan their future lives in relation to marriage, families and home ownership. I would support the concept put forward by the member for Jagajaga that, quite clearly, for people of modest means the repayment of HECS would impact on how they planned their future lives. It is a valid point to make. However, people who come from, say, wealthy backgrounds may not experience the same sorts of difficulties. Maybe this is where the member for Moncrieff has got a little bit confused. The member also blamed the brain drain on the high marginal taxes that we experience here. However, he overlooks the fact that these taxes have not been altered anyhow by the current government, which has been in power for some seven years.

I will now comment on the amendment. The Minister for Education, Science and Training would be aware of concerns expressed by the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Western Sydney, Janice Reid, regarding the new higher education package. I intend to go over some of these concerns. The university has established that it will
lose some $30 million over four years under the new plan. The Prime Minister has promised that it will not lose anything—there is a transitional fund, you see. The trouble is that the transitional fund is only $12.6 million and that has to be spread around the other 37 universities as well. So I really do not know where the money is coming from to help cover the dramatic funding collapse at UWS.

The *Daily Telegraph* carried a fairly disturbing article on Tuesday, 5 August, entitled ‘Uni on course to fight for its funds out west’. In that article, the staggering claim was made that the government is in possession of a report that says that UWS is ‘overfunded compared to similar universities’. To say that the University of Western Sydney is overfunded is a piece of fiction so brazen that it would belong in an Anne McCaffrey fantasy novel.

It also appears that this government’s report is targeting the Vice-Chancellor, Janice Reid, in a rather personal way. The report, it appears, implies that UWS is well-off because Janice Reid is paid a large salary package and is among the so-called highest paid vice-chancellors in the country. The truth, of course, is something quite different. Professor Reid receives a package the same as those of a number of other vice-chancellors at similar universities and far less than those of vice-chancellors at some of the older sandstone universities. Of course, this is Western Sydney, so nobody out there is allowed to earn very much money. It would upset the natural order of the universe or something. It is fine for people in the eastern suburbs to earn more than Janice Reid, but if somebody from Western Sydney earns that amount, it must be stopped!

Janice Reid’s package is not the real issue, of course. The personal attack by this government on her for speaking out against the education package which will damage her university—an attack that is implicit in this report—is a distraction from the main issue and is beneath contempt. The issue is the funding in total for the University of Western Sydney, which has suffered horrendously over the past seven years at the hands of this government. UWS has endured a cut of $270 million, the third largest cut in funding of any university in Australia—behind Melbourne and Monash—since the Howard government came to power in 1996. Without 50 or 150 years of building up investments in property and savings or the research base that can attract funding, UWS has been disproportionately hit by these funding deductions. An extra $30 million now will make it $300 million that this government has ripped out of UWS—an unconscionable amount.

One point that I would like to make is that UWS is situated in one of the fastest growing regions of Australia, so the demand for university places is going to increase year by year. As our population grows, and with young families moving into our community, there will be a natural need for more university places. But, unfortunately, as the Senate estimates process has revealed, there will actually be 510 fewer places at UWS in 2005 than there are now if current government policies are allowed to continue. The proposed higher education package includes extra money for regional universities. However, UWS is not classified as a regional university, even though it is situated in and serves one of the fastest growing regions in Australia. The University of Western Sydney has as its mission statement:

To be a university of international standing and outlook, achieving excellence through scholarship, teaching, learning, research and service to its regional, national and international communities, beginning with the people of Greater Western Sydney.

In fact, the words ‘region’ or ‘regional’ appear eight times in the statement of missions,
goals and values of UWS. The statement finishes with a list of core values. The final one, placed there for emphasis, reads ‘relevance and responsibility to our communities’.

I challenge the minister to come into this place and explain to this House and to the 1.7 million people who live in Western Sydney why their university, the one established specifically for their region, is not considered a regional university. UWS strongly argues that its Hawkesbury campus, at the very least, deserves to be considered under the current government criteria for additional funding. UWS will be seeking a boost in research funding as part of the review of research policy by the government. The trouble is that it is starting very much behind the eight ball. The university has lost half of its postgraduate research student places as a result of the last round of changes, resulting in important social, economic and environmental research being curtailed.

Fewer research places equals less research funding. Over the past few years we have seen a contraction of higher education funding, resulting in understaffing and a decaying campus fabric. There is an urgent need in Western Sydney to increase access and participation for all sections of the community and to provide students with educational opportunities, regardless of circumstances. This has not been achieved under this government, and in Janice Reid’s words:

It is hard to see at this point how these reforms will drive it.

New universities such as UWS have the potential to create a new educational culture in the regions they service. They certainly provide higher education opportunities for students from diverse backgrounds, many of whom come from families who have never had a family member educated at a university previously. This is a very important point. It has been reinforced by the statement by the Leader of the Opposition. As Simon Crean pointed out, some two-thirds of students attending UWS are the first in their families to go to university. Think about that. There have been universities in Australia for over 150 years, and the overwhelming majority of the current crop of students at UWS are the first ones in their families to be able to access these institutions and gain the benefits from the opportunities that higher education provides. Without UWS—the university created by the Labor Party to serve the Greater Western Sydney region—many of these families would still not have any of their members attending a university. The impact on our community, in both the short term and the longer term, simply cannot be understated or underestimated.

New universities assist in regional development as well as provide valuable research for the social and economic issues of the region. For the first time, the children of Western Sydney are in a position to capitalise on the education opportunities that a university can provide. But unfortunately this government is presiding over cuts in funding and falling numbers of student places. This is a disgrace.

On the very contentious issue of fees, the UWS vice-chancellor has argued strongly against fee increases for students because it is unfair to raise the financial burden on students and their families. Janice Reid makes the point that some universities will embrace higher HECS charges and the new fee-charging arrangements while others, such as the University of Western Sydney, will find that such fee increases are contrary to the access and equity needs of the regions they service. The mission and social charter of UWS does not sit well with the prospect of increasing the debt burden for students, particularly when students come from families of modest means who are unable to under-
write the additional costs of university education.

Janice Reid argues that well-established universities have substantially greater capacity to fund innovative research and capital development because, as I pointed out earlier, they have a resource base built up over decades of growth and government support, as well as substantial endowments and investments. The combination of the reserves they already have and the new increases will strengthen their position. Mind you, that will be on the backs of students who are forced to pay; nevertheless, it will strengthen the position of these universities.

At UWS the opposite will happen. It does not have the reserves that the older, more established universities have, and it is not in a position to increase the fees it charges its students. UWS also faces the increased costs associated with running a multi-campus university. Western Sydney is a geographically diverse region, and UWS has major campuses at Campbelltown, Bankstown, Parramatta, Penrith, Hawkesbury and Blacktown, in my electorate. In the Daily Telegraph article last week regarding the so-called overfunding of UWS and the government’s justification for funding cuts, John Phillips, the Chancellor of UWS, said:

I presume the government is not asking us to en-dear ourselves to the residents of Western Sydney by closing half our campuses.

When will the government wake up to the unique needs of this university and stop treating UWS like it has been treated? Without substantial support from the government for new universities like UWS, there will be a growing divide between the haves and the have-nots in the tertiary education sector. UWS has already been ill-treated by this government and now these changes proposed by this new education package will only serve to further squeeze our university.

It is not only UWS that has suffered under the Nelson plan. An article in the Sydney Morning Herald on 9 July entitled ‘Universities feel pain as fees take the high road’ outlines this problem. It says:

As the University of Sydney met in secret yesterday morning to increase student fees by 30 per cent, new Federal Government figures revealed at least eight tertiary institutions would be worse off in the first year of its shake-up of universities.

The Government’s figures indicate that the universities hit by the changes would lose at least $43 million under its three-year restructuring plan.

Three NSW universities fare badly, including one in the so-called Group of Eight, the University of NSW. It loses $3.4 million in 2005 and is being tipped to follow the University of Sydney in introducing a top-up increase in fees.

The University of Western Sydney will be more than the $4 million worse off in 2005 and $684,000 worse off in 2006, while the University of New England will lose almost $1.3 million in 2005.

While I am greatly concerned about the University of Western Sydney, the problem does not quite rest there; many other universities will suffer under this government’s program of funding cuts. We have seen over the past 30 years that economic theories when put into practice never work the way they are supposed to—reality always gets in the way. Besides, education cannot be and should not be merely a product of economic policy.

The minister must know what the ramifications of this policy will be on the University of Western Sydney and on others. Why, then, is he being deliberately destructive—unless he has something against these universities or maybe the students that go to them? UWS is too important to the 1.7 million people of Western Sydney—and counting—to be treated so badly. Whilst the Australian Vice-Chancellors Committee has by and large embraced the package, the vice-
chancellor of our great university has said that these changes will hurt our university.

UWS is in a fairly unique position: it serves a region yet it is not a regional university—at least not in the eyes of the government. I believe it has a social importance far greater than many other universities and that it is extremely underestimated by this government. As I have said, two-thirds of the students attending the university are the first in the history of their families to do so. This is a huge social impact on the future of our communities. I cannot think of another university that comes close to having a similar social impact. Yet with all of this we are facing funding cuts, falling numbers and a government that is an architect of both.

Once again, there is a clear distinction between the government and the opposition on our approach to this policy area and, as with Medicare, the differences could not be starker. On the one hand, you have a government offering increased debt, falling funding and fewer places. On the other hand, Labor is offering increased funding and 20,000 more places. With the launch of Aim Higher: Learning, Training and Better Jobs for More Australians, Labor has outlined its commitment to this vital sector of our community.

The Leader of the Opposition, and Labor, recognise the importance of the University of Western Sydney. Aim Higher: Learning, Training and Better Jobs for More Australians is a $2.3 billion, fully costed and fully funded plan to rebuild, reform and expand our universities and TAFEs to ensure better quality education for all Australians. Government is all about priorities and Labor’s priority is education, not tax breaks for foreign executives or diesel rebates for huge multinational mining companies. Our priority is unashamedly the future educational prospects of our children.

Before I conclude, I raise another concern. This is highlighted in an article that appeared in the Sydney Morning Herald today. It is headed ‘Nelson hid university fee risks, say officials’. The article starts by saying:

The Federal Government hid from the public the adverse effects of raising university tuition fees, current and former Education Department officials said yesterday. It goes on to say:

*HECS and Opportunities in Higher Education* found that changes introduced in 1996 reduced the number of older people applying to study at university by about 17,000 a year. The number of school leaver applicants fell by about 9,000 a year.

Investment in education is vital to the future of our country. We cannot afford to downsize our future. This is why Labor have stepped up to the plate and has the policies to address our future education needs. It starts with early childhood learning and it never stops. Labor believe in lifelong learning, which is the key to a versatile and flexible work force at the cutting edge of the new millennium. Our fully costed and fully funded policy is a down payment on the future. It starts to repair the damage of seven years of neglect that this government has overseen. We want all Australians to aim higher; we want universities and TAFEs to aim higher; and, above all, we want our government to aim higher.

**Ms JULIE BISHOP (Curtin) (8.47 p.m.)—**The Higher Education Legislation Amendment Bill 2003 is of fundamental importance to Australia and, by implication, to the members of this House. I think that is beyond dispute by members of the opposition or members on this side. Nonetheless, from the debate within and without this parliament, it is clear that opinions differ sharply on the legislation and on the reforms to Australia’s universities that it serves to implement.

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**CHAMBER**
I wish to place on the parliamentary record my robust support for this bill and, more generally, for the reform program being introduced by the Minister for Education, Science and Training, the honourable member for Bradfield. I do this as a member who has the privilege of representing in this place a number of universities—the University of Western Australia, Edith Cowan University and Curtin University of Technology—as they all have campuses within my electorate. The main campus of the University of Western Australia is located in Nedlands, Edith Cowan University has a major campus at Churchlands and the Curtin University of Technology has campuses in West Perth and Shenton Park. I am not overlooking Western Australia’s fourth university, Murdoch University. Prior to entering parliament, I was a member of the senate of Murdoch University and I remain in close contact with that institution.

I am aware that, just as opinions differ within this place, preferences for reform differ on those campuses amongst students and academics. Yet there is a general consensus that reform is, in and of itself, vital. In less than half a century, this country has experienced an extraordinary increase in the rate of university participation. Just 50 years ago, less than 350 of every 100,000 Australians attended a university. Today that figure has increased more than tenfold to 498,000 Australians attended a university. Today that figure has increased more than tenfold to 498,000 Australians attended a university. Today that figure has increased more than tenfold to 498,000 Australians attended a university. Today that figure has increased more than tenfold to 498,000 Australians attended a university. Today that figure has increased more than tenfold to 498,000 Australians attended a university. Today that figure has increased more than tenfold to 498,000 Australians attended a university. Today that figure has increased more than tenfold to 498,000 Australians attended a university. Today that figure has increased more than tenfold to 498,000 Australians attended a university. Today that figure has increased more than tenfold to 498,000 Australians attended a university.

Along with the great economic, social and intellectual benefits have come genuine strains, both financial and educational. These are undeniable and so are the challenges they present to policy makers. But they are nothing new and they are not irresolvable. Andrew Norton, one of the most profound commentators on Australian higher education and a long-time reform campaigner, in last year’s monograph, *The Unchained University*, said:


yet, he says:

... things are far from hopeless. Serious as they are, universities’ problems are largely the creation of policy, and not rooted in deep-seated social or economic malaise. Unlike crime, or family breakdown, or the plight of indigenous communities, it isn’t difficult to find reforms that could produce significant improvements in relatively short periods of time.

It is to the credit of this minister that he has sought out those reforms and faced down those problems and the vested interests opposed to change. But I would go further, for I see these reforms not only as indicative of the minister’s good sense and the appetite for reform of the government, but also, like much of the Liberal reform enacted since 1996, as expressing an appreciation of the changing expectations of Australian citizens.

The American constitutional lawyer and security and intelligence strategist Philip Bobbitt made the case in his magnum opus, *The Shield of Achilles: War, Peace, and the Course of History*, that the world was witnessing a transformative period in history, from the idea of the nation-state first expressed in 19th century Germany and the United States to the idea of a market state. This transformation was analogous to similar reconstitutions of the state in the preceding centuries. Regardless of whether one accepts Bobbitt’s thesis in its entirety there certainly appears to be a revised expectation of gov-
ernments by citizens expressed in the commitment to maximise opportunity, rather than prescribe outcomes as the nation-state decreed. This is not partisan—it was as characteristic of the reformist activities of the Hawke government as it was of Thatcher and Reagan, and as it has been expressed by Western leaders as varied as George W. Bush, Bill Clinton, Gerhard Schroeder and Tony Blair.

In the specific context of Australian higher education, the policy articulated in this bill is also informed by the understanding that not all Australian taxpayers will access a university education but they will all pay for it through their taxes; that the principal benefit of such an education flows directly to those who do achieve that access; and that students remain the best source of finance for their own education—and, might I add, deserve to be treated as valuable paying customers, not anonymous enrolments. As with all policy, we ought to strive to maximise the personal and the broader benefits while restraining the costs which are often borne by third parties—taxpayers. This is not to say that the government does not remain committed to providing substantial subsidies and high overall revenue levels. After all, it is expected that this year the total revenue available to universities in Australia will be $11.3 billion—a real increase of over 31 per cent since this government came to office. Of that total, $6.4 billion represents total higher education funding from the Commonwealth, including HECS. Rather, the funding reforms provided for in this bill will sustain these high levels into the future, thereby meeting our future educational needs.

The bill’s provisions were derived from the 2002 review of higher education commissioned by the minister. That review canvassed opinion from across the country and included the views not only of those directly involved with higher education—administrators, students and academics—but also of those indirectly involved, such as the business community and the wider public. The review confirmed suspicions that the present arrangements for university funding were unsustainable and, untreated, had the potential to devalue Australian education. From the review came the government’s response in Our Universities: Backing Australia’s Future, a package that proposed to increase public investment in the sector by $1.5 billion over each of the next four years. Within 10 years an additional $10 billion would be provided to universities. That proposal now finds legislative form in the bill before the House.

This bill increases the number of Commonwealth subsidised places at universities and increases the funding attached to each of those students. This is linked to management improvements. The bill provides for additional moneys for universities outside the metropolitan centres, encourages excellence in teaching practice as well as greater cross-institutional collaboration, and includes new places for high priority professions such as nursing and teaching, with related concessional fee arrangements.

Greater choice will be introduced into the system and there will still be no up-front fees for Australians to enter undergraduate studies at accredited institutions, except, I might add, the compulsory student union fees imposed by the universities—fees that the government has sought to abolish and the opposition has sought to entrench. New income-contingent loans will be made available by the Commonwealth to meet the needs of fee paying students attending both public and eligible private higher education institutions.

The bill does not consist solely of the initiatives announced in Our Universities: Backing Australia’s Future. It also includes funding for the reconstruction of the Austra-
lian National University’s Mount Stromlo Observatory—a magnificent facility destroyed in the bushfires that swept the Australian Capital Territory and New South Wales in January of this year. Also, the Higher Education Funding Act, the foundation act for the sector, will have its funding amounts amended in line with indexation and the latest HECS liability estimates. The Australian Research Council Act 2001 will also be amended, in this case to facilitate administrative and financial management reforms designed to improve Australian Research Council operations. There are also a number of miscellaneous amendments.

Perhaps the most admirable people in the present system are those prominent Australians who have returned to the classroom after lucrative and continuing careers in the private and public sectors. I would therefore like to use this opportunity to praise those persons doing such good for young Australian minds. Yet these contributors are burdened and warned off by decaying infrastructure, inflexibility, overbureaucratisation and closed-mindedness. It is my hope that the government’s reforms will act to diminish those burdens and barriers, and support those persons in their efforts.

I must also mention the response of the Australian Vice-Chancellors Committee. The committee said that overall it endorsed strongly the main policy direction and fiscal commitment of the Commonwealth to the higher education sector. Incidentally, the committee urged that legislation be passed in 2003. I have spoken at different times and at length with the four vice-chancellors from the four universities in Western Australia. Again, while the views of each university may differ, all recognise the government’s commitment to reform and have praised the efforts of the Minister for Education, Science and Training. In particular I mention the President of the Australian Vice-Chancellors Committee, Professor Deryck Schreuder, who is also the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Western Australia. He said:

It provides greater flexibility for universities to pursue their own missions and it turns around the slide in Government investment in higher education as a percentage of GDP, providing the basis for greater excellence and equity in Australia’s universities.

As I said, reservations were expressed, but Professor Schreuder said:

It is the AVCC’s hope that the Parliament and the Australian community will wish to join in this critical debate over the future of our universities, and our own country’s economic and social wellbeing.

As Andrew Norton concluded of the present system in 2002, it could all be so much better. That is what these reforms offer.

Debate interrupted.

ADJOURNMENT

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. I.R. Causley)—Order! It being 9.00 p.m., I propose the question:

That the House do now adjourn.

Medicare: Bulk-Billing

Ms HALL (Shortland) (9.00 p.m.)—The people of the Shortland electorate have had enough. They are disgusted that the Howard government has done nothing to stop the disastrous decline in bulk-billing in their electorate. People in the Shortland electorate are so disgusted that they joined me in a walk to save Medicare, along the foreshore of Lake Macquarie yesterday. We walked from Eleebana to Warners Bay, where we were joined by my colleague Kelly Hoare, the member for Charlton, who also has a bulk-billing and doctor crisis in her electorate. It is a crisis brought on wholly and solely by the inaction and destructive nature of this Howard government.
The people of Lake Macquarie have really suffered under the Howard government and its assault on Medicare. In March 2000 the bulk-billing rate in Shortland was 78.9 per cent. At the end of March 2003 it was 51.2 per cent. That is a direct result of the Howard government’s approach to Medicare and its desire to kill it off. As John Howard said back in the 1980s, it is ‘a quagmire’, ‘a complete failure’ and ‘a total disaster’ and he is going to get rid of it. He set out to get rid of it and that is what he has done. What does this decline in bulk-billing really mean? What does it mean to the people of the Shortland electorate? It means that they have to make decisions; they have to make a choice about whether they can afford to go the doctor or to put food on the table. Members on the other side of this House may not believe that this is real. But many people have come up to me in shopping centres and have said, ‘Jill, what can you do to make John Howard and his government listen to us? We like Medicare and we want Medicare to stay, but they ignore us.’

This decline has been exacerbated by the closure of Belmont Medicare office in the electorate of Shortland—yet another heartless act by the Howard government. People—in the main, elderly people—have to travel 20 kilometres to their nearest Medicare office. They are people who rely on public transport, and that public transport is not frequent. The Medicare office staff at Charlestown identified the reopening of the Belmont Medicare office as the single most important need concerning Medicare on the eastern side of Lake Macquarie. I have submitted 10,000 signatures to this parliament, yet the Howard government has ignored them, just as it has ignored all the petitions I have submitted about bulk-billing and the fact that the people of the Shortland electorate want the government to reinstate it.

I received a phenomenal amount of support as we walked along the foreshore yesterday. People came up to us, asking for stickers and petitions. They congratulated us on our campaign to save Medicare and to stop John Howard destroying it. They offered to help us and to do anything they could to make the government and the Prime Minister listen to them. We received support from motorists as they drove by. What seemed like every second car that drove along the esplanade tooted its horn, and people shouted out in support for us. The success of our walk yesterday reflects the support of the people of Lake Macquarie for Medicare. It also shows their rejection of the Howard government’s A Fairer Medicare package. It is a package that will drive the final nail into the coffin of Medicare, as members on the other side of the House well know. It is a package that will deliver a two-tiered US style system to the people of Australia. The people of my area know that Medicare is the answer to quality, affordable health care. They like bulk-billing, as they know it is the only thing that guarantees all Australians access to a doctor when they are sick. The people of Shortland and Lake Macquarie have spoken. They want Medicare, they want bulk-billing and they want them to stay. They demand that the government and the Prime Minister listen to them.

**Education and Training**

Mrs MAY (McPherson) (9.05 p.m.)—I recently had the pleasure of officially launching Study Gold Coast Australia. This project was supported by the Gold Coast Area Consultative Committee, which provided funding for the initiative through the federal government’s Regional Assistance Program. The launch was a celebration of excellence in education—a celebration of excellence which is recognised nationally and internationally. Australia has one of the best education and training systems in the world, and
the launch is the first stage of a strategy to position our region on the Gold Coast as a preferred education destination in a global market.

The Gold Coast Education and Training Network, with chief executive officer Sir Frank Moore and chairperson Deb Daly at the helm, is undoubtedly one of Australia’s most successful cluster initiatives, representing over 100 education providers on the Gold Coast. The cluster includes our schools, universities, TAFE and vocational education institutions, to name a few. International students have an enormous choice of excellent schools, training providers and universities from which they can receive a high-level education that is second to none. Sir Frank Moore has driven this initiative. His vision and passion for the project now places the Gold Coast in a very strategic position to become the preferred destination for education in a global market. Over the next nine years the industry growth is projected at around 118 per cent. This education cluster initiative on the Gold Coast sets up our region for the future—a future in which to capitalise on a growth industry.

The Gold Coast region offers a unique opportunity for students. Over 100 educational providers, including four universities, mean that students can access educational pathways from English studies through to trade certificates, as well as world-recognised undergraduate and postgraduate programs. It offers all this in a subtropical climate, boasting 40 kilometres of surfing beach and year-round swimming—a very attractive package. Australia’s Gold Coast is one of the most dynamic regions in the world and an ideal location in which to live, study, work and play. The launch was the first stage of that global positioning strategy, which includes the launch of the new web site. That web site will be a wonderful tool for promoting the Gold Coast as the No. 1 destination for international students to study and work. All the providers in the cluster are listed on the web site. It is easy to browse, the information is excellent and the links are first-rate.

On the Gold Coast, we already attract students from around the world—from places such as the Scandinavian countries, England, Germany, Japan, China, India and Pakistan, and many students from America. The Howard government recognises the economic benefits to this country from those international students. The education industry is worth more than $500 million a year to our local economy on the Gold Coast. This project is further evidence of our innovation city moving ahead with vision and commitment, recognising its strengths in the education sector and capitalising on those strengths on the international stage. Gold Coast City is a city of contrasts. It has a natural beauty. As a city it is recognised as the tourism capital of Australia. We know we can build on that reputation and become the education capital of Australia. We have the best in education, from our schools—both public and private—to our universities and all that lies in between.

We are a city of opportunities, a city of growth and vision and, through our education providers, we are taking our excellence to world. I have no doubt we will attract many more overseas students to study in our special part of the world through this innovative cluster. Of course, as the number of students increases, so will the jobs in the industry. An estimated 1,000 new full-time equivalent jobs could be created in this industry each year over the next 10 years. The Commonwealth government and the Gold Coast Area Consultative Committee, headed up by Annie Norton-Knight and supported by all Gold Coast federal members of parliament, are all behind this project. We wish Sir Frank and his team every success for the future with the education cluster.
Medicare: Bulk-Billing

Ms HOARE (Charlton) (9.09 p.m.)—I also rise this evening to speak about Medicare, bulk-billing rates and doctor shortages in our local area. I was delighted yesterday to join my colleague the member for Shortland on our walk to save Medicare. As you may know, Mr Deputy Speaker Causley, the Shortland and Charlton electorates adjoin at Warners Bay Road on the eastern side of Lake Macquarie. Around the lake foreshore there is a walking and bicycle path, and it was great to get out there yesterday morning at 11 o’clock. It was a bright sunny day—although the wind was a bit cold—the lake was sparkling and the sailors were out. As my colleague said, the people supported us along the way by saying, ‘Can we have a petition?’ tooting their horns and giving us a wave of encouragement. It was great to see.

In our area, particularly in the Charlton electorate, we have experienced dramatic declines in bulk-billing. The bulk-billing rate in the Charlton electorate plummeted by 21.8 per cent between March 2000 and March 2003. As my colleague said, the people of Lake Macquarie depend on Medicare and bulk-billing as they ensure people can afford to see a doctor when they are sick. They do not want the situation where their credit card is more important than their Medicare card. We both believe that access to health should be based on a person’s need, not on their ability to pay.

Just last month the Wyee Medical Practice suddenly closed up shop. I am very concerned that this now leaves Wyee families without access to a local GP. In Morisset and Cooranbong, it is very hard to find a doctor who will take any more patients. It seems impossible to find one who will bulk-bill. There are not enough doctors in the Southlakes area and, with a growing population, the pressures being placed on our hardworking doctors will only make things worse. Families in Wyee need their doctor. If a child needs to see a doctor urgently and a GP appointment cannot be made, many families now turn up to Wyong Hospital. This puts pressure on our public hospital system and usually means a long wait.

I want to work with my community to get a doctor back to Wyee. As a community, I know that we can work together to get our services back. We need more doctors in our region. We cannot afford to see them leave. We need doctors to bulk-bill so all families can access medical attention when they need it. I have distributed a petition around Wyee and Wyee Point as part of a campaign to get a doctor back to Wyee. The response to the petition has been overwhelming. I thank the Wyee community for its support. Hopefully, working as a community, we will be able to succeed. I am contacting the government minister and the Central Coast Division of General Practice to bring to their attention the needs of Wyee families for a local doctor. I am asking them to assist us in encouraging a doctor back to Wyee.

A couple of years ago we lost a medical centre in a little suburb called Boolaroo. After a lot of community support and campaigning, we were able to get a doctor into Boolaroo. Dr Lynette Lamb is still there, although she struggles. She came on the rally yesterday and she said: ‘Kelly, it is very, very difficult to keep bulk-billing. The funding from the government does not keep up with the costs.’ She tries to bulk-bill everybody, but she is finding that she has to limit it to pensioners and health care card holders only. She is the only doctor in Boolaroo, which has quite an ageing population.

We all know that being able to see a doctor when somebody in the family is sick can be pretty tough. Finding a doctor who is prepared to bulk-bill is almost impossible these
days. Part of my job as a federal member of parliament is to help our community gain better access to services, including doctors and Medicare. Labor is the party that built Medicare and believes in Medicare. Under Labor, Medicare was not in crisis; it worked. In 1996, when this government came to power, more than 80 per cent of visits to the doctor cost patients nothing because the doctor bulk-billed. The Prime Minister, in contrast, has never believed in Medicare and his policies have put Medicare on the critical list. This government’s policies mean that there are now 21 per cent less bulk-billing doctor consultations each year in west Lake Macquarie and south Newcastle than there were in 2000. (Time expired)

Aviation: Second Sydney Airport

Mr BARTLETT (Macquarie)  (9.14 p.m.)—Following a recent statement by the Leader of the Opposition, there has been a lot of talk about the proposed Badgerys Creek airport site. If we could be sure, and it is a very big ‘if’, this was the end of Labor’s plans for Badgerys Creek, that would be most welcome. I have been arguing for seven or eight years that Badgerys Creek is not the place for an airport. My parliamentary colleague Jackie Kelly, the member for Lindsay, has been arguing the same thing. At first blush the opposition leader seems to have finally listened to us and to the people of Western Sydney, but we are not out of the woods yet. Two big questions remain. The first question is: will Labor’s new position survive Labor’s next leadership challenge? So many of Labor’s team, so many of its frontbench, are on the record as having argued strongly and stridently for Badgerys Creek. In fact, just 2½ years ago the shadow Treasurer and leadership aspirant, the member for Werriwa, said this in Hansard of Labor’s policy:

Our national platform states that we are committed to the construction of a second Sydney airport somewhere inside the Sydney basin. Of course, all urban planners know that sites like Wilton and Goulburn are outside the Sydney basin. Anyone with commonsense would know that the only available site acquired by the Commonwealth, cleared by two environmental impact statements and approved by umpteen economic studies is Badgerys Creek. So Labor policy is to proceed at Badgerys Creek—that is crystal clear …

‘That is crystal clear,’ said the member for Werriwa, now one of Labor’s leadership aspirants. So the question is: the current opposition leader may be opposed to Badgerys Creek but what will be the position of the next Leader of the Opposition regarding Badgerys Creek?

The second question is: what alternatives are Labor considering? Labor have made it very clear that they are strongly committed to a second Sydney airport. Simon Crean has made that very clear in recent days, so have other Labor spokesmen. That begs the question: where will that second airport be? They have suggested all sorts of locations. Even in the opposition leader’s suggestion there was a question about the use of Richmond. They are considering putting a large commercial airport right in the middle of the Hawkesbury area, right in the middle of my electorate, and it is just as close to the Blue Mountains as in fact the Badgerys Creek site is.

There have been serious questions for years over Labor’s commitment to retaining the RAAF base at Richmond. In fact, for decades they have been sniffing around airport proposals for the Hawkesbury, as far back as Prime Minister Whitlam in the early 1970s proposing an airport at Galston, just outside of the Hawkesbury area. The point is this: Labor’s approach has been consistently transparent for year after year and decade after decade. That approach is simply this: try and get aircraft noise out of Labor held seats and put the aircraft noise into seats that they do not care about—worry about their
mates, do not worry about other people who may be affected. I have a message for the opposition leader: the people of Hawkesbury, the people of my electorate, will not allow Labor to turn the RAAF base into a noisy commercial airport. They will not allow him to relocate his airport plans from Badgerys Creek to Richmond. This is just not good enough. The Leader of the Opposition, in his efforts to try to save the hides of some of his own marginal seat members, would consider inflicting aircraft noise on Liberal held seats. It is just not acceptable. It is not tolerable at all. This is utter contempt for the people in my electorate and it stands condemned.

This raises the obvious question about the solution to Sydney’s airport needs. The answer is clear, and it was repeated again just 10 days ago in the release of the Sydney airport management plan: Sydney does not need a second airport. I have been on record as saying that for years. The Sydney Airport Corporation has been saying that for years. With better management, with the advent of quieter and larger aircraft, with better use of landing and departure slots, Mascot can last for decades and well into the future beyond that. We do not need a second Sydney airport. The point is that the demands for a second Sydney airport are being driven by the politics of aircraft noise, not by the physical capacity of Mascot. They are being driven by the politics of the Labor Party to try to suit its own seats and its own political purposes. Given that the opposition leader is willing to play those politics for the sake of his own colleagues, to protect his own seats, he needs to come clean and tell us where he plans to build that second airport. So the Leader of the Opposition needs to come clean with his plans for a second Sydney airport and the question is: Mr Crean, where are you planning on putting that airport? (Time expired)

Gellibrand Electorate: Senior Students Forum

Ms ROXON (Gellibrand) (9.20 p.m.)—I would like to talk tonight about a senior students forum that I held in my Gellibrand electorate office on Monday, 28 July. I had 17 students who accepted an invitation to come to talk to me about the sorts of issues that they were concerned about, the issues that they would like me to raise in this parliament in representing them. The students came from Braybrook College, Bayside Secondary College, Williamstown High School, the Westbourne Grammar Williamstown Campus, Sunshine College, Marion College, Gilmore College, Footscray City Secondary College and Caroline Chisholm Catholic College. The students were mostly VCE students, some from different years. There were some school captains, some SRC reps and some who were simply more interested in politics than others and were keen to come along and talk to me about their ideas. They were all bright and enthusiastic if, to start with, a little bit shy but they soon got talking about issues that they were very passionate about. One of the issues that came up—in fact it was the first topic of discussion—was their aspirations after finishing school. Every single one of the 17 students that came to my electorate office to talk to me wanted to go on, after they had finished their high school education, to some type of further education. I would like to read to the parliament, obviously without identifying each of them, a number of quotes and comments that different students made. I think they will give the flavour of the concerns that our young students have today. They said:

It scares us that we will no longer be able to afford further study beyond secondary school.

It is terrible that academic standards and qualifications can be put aside or lowered for full fee paying students but not for us.
It will be increasingly harder to strike the balance between study and working to support and pay for university or TAFE study.

We feel like we may have to choose between the course of our dreams and something else based on not what we want to do but what we can afford.

People in this House will be interested to know that a number of students specifically raised their concerns that their choices for getting a further education could affect their own parent’s choices. They expressed a number of worries that a choice to go on and study further might affect the retirement choices of their parents. This is something that the 16- and 17-year-old students who came and talked to me were very conscious of. They also wanted to talk about the educational opportunities and particularly the perceptions of studying in Melbourne’s west. They said that they sometimes feel it can be intimidating to come from the west. A couple said that they have been at functions or cross-school meetings where they feel that their education is devalued just because of where they live. One of them said, ‘We have the best English teacher in the state teaching at our school, but we can still be judged by where our school is located.’ They have also said, ‘There is a perception, which is just plain wrong, that some of our schools are overcome by drugs. While some people might use drugs, all of us should not be branded by it.’ Another comment was, ‘It can be disheartening that such a low proportion of students from public schools go on to study courses like law and medicine.’

It is interesting that these issues are playing on their minds and obviously they are of concern to me as a local member of parliament as issues that should be taken up and worked on. In particular in relation to drug education, there were some suggestions by the students that personal testimony would often be more compelling and persuasive than some of the drier factual information and education that was provided in this area. They understood that drug use was initially a choice and said, ‘Sometimes our parents and other adults do not give us credit for having made the choice to avoid drugs,’ which I thought was interesting, and, ‘Understanding the consequences is an important part of ensuring that young people avoid drugs.’

They also wanted to make comments specifically about education funding and said that they felt there would be a preparedness to give up tax cuts or to pay more tax for greater public services but people just needed to see more clearly where their taxes were going. They also said—and you would have noticed from the list I read out that they were predominantly public schools, as is the case in my electorate—that there was nothing wrong with funding non-government schools as long as it was based on the needs of those schools.

They also expressed some concerns that young people needed more places to go for recreational activities where their parents would not worry about them but where they could be independent. I am very proud of these students. I thought that they were very articulate. It does take a little bit of bravery to come along and tell your local member of parliament what you are interested in and what you want them to do. I congratulate them for coming and talking to me and making my job easier by explaining their interests and the sorts of issues that they would like me to pursue. I certainly will be taking these and the other issues they raised to the parliament in the debate on issues that affect them and on the sorts of matters that we develop in our policies. Thank you to all the students for participating. I hope that their schools will continue to participate in the future.
Mr CAMERON THOMPSON (Blair) (9.25 p.m.)—I rise tonight to continue with the theme raised by the member for Gellibrand about young people and their views and their hopes for the future and also about the contribution they make. I have recently been along to two very successful graduation days of Green Corps projects. These are projects funded by the federal Department of Family and Community Services but which also involve local groups in giving young people in the community the opportunity to contribute to the environment and to learn some pretty valuable skills along the way. As a result, in the electorate of Blair we have had a coalition of the willing attacking weeds for the past six months. They have done it very effectively under the auspices of the Brisbane Valley Kilcoy Landcare Inc. group and also the Crows Nest Shire Council. They are two separate projects.

I would like to concentrate today on what happened in the Kilcoy project but, firstly, I will just touch on the Crows Nest one. As is typical with Green Corps projects, they took on a very beautiful area which had a great deal of opportunity for passing tourists and the community to get out, recreate and have a look at the natural environment and to walk around the area of Bullockys Rest and the parks in the township of Crows Nest. Of course, under the Green Corps project, they have got in there and ripped out many of the weeds. When we are talking about lantana, cat’s claw creeper and things like that—which had completely destroyed the amenity of the creek as far as the nearby rest areas on the roadway were concerned. Also, any ability for the locals to enjoy that beautiful natural area was really lost because of those weeds. The Green Corps group confronted that. They planted 1,600 trees in their project. They also got another 94 volunteers on National Tree Day to plant another 1,574 trees. They removed over 300 cubic metres of environmental weeds from the riparian zones around the Stanley River catchment, of which Kilcoy Creek is a tributary, and they collected very important water quality data for the Waterwatch project. We need a lot more of that water quality data to map out water use and properly plan for the protection of the environment in our area.

Those people involved in the Brisbane Valley Kilcoy Landcare Green Corps project did a number of projects to support local schools and to promote awareness of the environment in those schools. They also did other projects, such as working at the Nurem Environmental Park and the Greenhide scrub rainforest reserve. They assisted Brisbane Valley Kilcoy Landcare in hosting a ‘land for wildlife’ open day, and there have been some inquiries following on from that which will result in more properties being registered for

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the protection of wildlife. Green Corps is a wonderful project. I must admit I was sceptical when it was first set up that it would get the support that it obviously has but I just cannot get over the number of young people lining up to do this kind of work. What they get at the end of it of it, apart from the satisfaction and the value to the community, is good training and good certification that will stand them in good stead for the future. I applaud everyone involved.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Causley)—Order! It being 9.30 p.m. the debate is interrupted.

House adjourned at 9.30 p.m.

NOTICES

The following notices were given:

Mr Cameron Thompson to move:
(1) the number of children in Australia who have insulin dependent diabetes;
(2) the devastating long-term health consequences and medical complications for children with insulin dependent diabetes, including:
   (a) hypoglycemia;
   (b) heart disease;
   (c) microvascular disease;
   (d) limb amputation;
   (e) kidney failure; and
   (f) retinopathy or diabetic eye disease;
(3) the outstanding work by Australian researchers to find a cure through pancreatic islet cell transplantation;
(4) that research is the key to finding a transplant procedure that is safe and available to children; and
(5) the need for support from the federal Government to establish:
   (a) a national clinical islet cell transplant centre to advance islet cell transplantation; and
   (b) a research grant to attract the world’s best scientists and ensure Australia’s position at the forefront of global research.

Mr Murphy to move:
That this House:
(1) declares that Badgerys Creek is no longer a viable site for the location of a second airport for the people of Sydney; and
(2) recommends that a Joint Select Committee be established to identify a site suitable for the location of Sydney’s second airport, having regard to (a) aircraft noise; (b) air pollution and (c) other risks associated with aircraft movements.

Mr Organ to present a bill for an act to provide for comprehensive reduction of travel entitlements for former Members of the Parliament, and for related purposes.

Ms Plibersek to present a bill for an act to amend the Australian Citizenship Act 1948.

Mr Crean to present a bill for an act to amend the Corporations Act 2001 and the Workplace Relations Act 1996, and for related purposes.

Mr Crean to present a bill for an act to amend the Workplace Relations Act 1996 and for related purposes.

Mr Griffin to present a bill for an act to amend the Trade Practices Act 1974 to give the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission power to deal with any price exploitation arising from changes to the law in relation to public liability, and for related purposes.

Mr Latham to present a bill for an act to provide small businesses with a simpler method of calculating Goods and Services Tax payments.

Mr Sidebottom to move:
That this House:
(1) acknowledges the importance of 17 October 2003 being the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty;
(2) is deeply concerned about the 1.2 billion people world-wide who are required to live on less than $1 per day, and the adverse effects on health, education, and income earning ability which result;

(3) supports efforts by the United Nations to reduce world poverty through the development of its Millennium Development Goals, which call for:

(a) halving the proportion of people living on $1 per day and halving the number of people who suffer from hunger;

(b) ensuring that boys and girls alike complete primary schooling;

(c) eliminating gender disparity in all levels of education;

(d) reducing by two-thirds the under-five mortality rate;

(e) reducing by three-quarters the maternal mortality ratio;

(f) reversing the spread of HIV/AIDS, malaria and other major infectious diseases;

(g) ensuring environmental sustainability through integration of sustainable development into country policies and reversing the loss of environmental resources, halving the proportion of people without access to potable water and significantly improving the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers; and

(h) developing a global partnership for development through raising official development assistance, expanding market access, and encouraging debt sustainability; and

(4) calls on all national governments and international institutions to make achievement of the Millennium Development Goals a key purpose of their international and domestic programs.
QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

The following answers to questions were circulated:

**Housing: First Home Owners Scheme**

*(Question No. 255)*

*Mrs Irwin* asked the Treasurer, upon notice, on 20 March 2002:

1. How many First Home Owner Grants have been made since the commencement of the scheme.
2. What sum has been paid out in grants since the commencement of the scheme.
3. Are applicants for the grant required to live in the home for which the grant was given for any fixed period of time.
4. Are recipients of the grant permitted to lease the home for which the grant was made for any fixed period of time; if so, how are grant applicants advised of this condition.
5. Is the scheme audited to ensure that applicants have not previously owned residential property; if so, what checks are carried out to confirm the status of the applicant.
6. Are these checks carried out on all applicants or only a sample.
7. Is the scheme audited to ensure that applicants do not lease the property for which the grant applied for any period of time proscribed in the conditions for the grant; if so, what checks are carried out to confirm the applicants compliance with this condition.
8. Are these checks carried out on all applicants or only a sample.
9. Have any persons been found to have breached this condition.
10. What action has been taken against any persons found to have breached this condition.
11. What penalties does the scheme allow when conditions are breached.

*Mr Costello*—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

1. At 30 April 2003, 462,106 grants have been paid since the commencement of the scheme.
2. At 30 April 2003, the total sum of grants paid under the scheme was $3,647,034,058. (These numbers are provided by the States and Territories and are subject to revision.)
3. to (11) The FHOS is administered by the States and Territories in a manner consistent with the principles outlined in the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Reform of Commonwealth-State Financial Relations endorsed by Heads of Governments in June 1999. Therefore, these questions should be directed to the relevant State and Territory authorities.

**Superannuation: Commercial Nominees of Australia Ltd**

*(Question No. 281)*

*Mr Mossfield* asked the Minister representing the Minister for Revenue and Assistant Treasurer, upon notice, on 21 March 2002:

1. In relation to the collapse of Commercial Nominees Australia (CNA), why, when the Australian Prudential Regulation Authority (APRA) required CNA to stop accepting contributions to the ECMT from AWERF, the Network Superannuation Fund and Midas Superannuation Fund, did it allow CNA to continue accepting contributions from approximately 475 small APRA funds (SAFs)?
2. Why did APRA remove CNA as Trustee for the 475 SAFs two months after removing CNA as the trustee for the three funds mentioned in part (1)?
(3) Was APRA aware that, at the time it removed CNA as trustee, CNA was negotiating with Perpetual Trustees Limited to take over the administration of some or all of the 475 SAFs; if not, why not?

(4) What process was used by APRA to appoint Oak Breeze, a liquidator, as the temporary trustee of the 475 SAFs given its lack of experience in this area and the work already undertaken by Perpetual Trustees with regard to the SAFs and their compliance?

(5) What guarantees did APRA seek from Oak Breeze that it would fulfil its claim of bringing all SAFs to a level of compliance by 31 October 2001?

(6) How many funds were actually brought to a level of compliance by this date?

(7) How many funds have been brought to a level of compliance since 31 October 2001?

(8) What guarantees or limits did APRA seek from or place on Oak Breeze or Price Waterhouse Coopers regarding fees and charges in relation to the administration of the SAFs?

(9) Are these guarantees or limits different from the standard required under the Superannuation Industry Supervision Act (SIS Act) for other trustees of superannuation funds; if so why?

(10) Have the protocols between the Australian Securities and Investments Commission and APRA, detailed in the Senate Select Committee Report, been agreed to and executed by both agencies; if not, what is the anticipated time frame for this to occur?

(11) What is the anticipated time frame for the Minister to make a decision regarding the implementation of section 229 of the SIS Act?

Mr Costello—The Minister for Revenue and Assistant Treasurer has provided the following answer to the honourable member’s question:

(1) APRA relied upon assurances made by the new CEO of CNA that its new business was quarantined from past problems.

(2) APRA replaced CNA as trustee of the three larger funds (AWERF, Network and Midas) in December 2000 based upon the report of the Investigator that had been appointed under Section 257 of the Superannuation Industry Supervision legislation. At the same time that APRA served upon CNA a “Show Cause” notice, requiring CNA to show cause to why APRA should not revoke CNA’s authority to act as a trustee of superannuation funds. This notice was acted upon as soon as possible having regard to due process and consideration of the merits of CNA’s case to it.

(3) No. CNA never advised APRA of any involvement with Perpetual Trustees prior to being replaced as trustee.

(4) APRA adhered to its policy for the appointment of replacement trustees. APRA sought expressions of interest from Price Waterhouse Coopers, KPMG, Ferrier Hodgson and Sims Lockwood. These submissions were then assessed and Price Waterhouse Coopers was selected as the most appropriate replacement trustee considering the nature of the task that were anticipated would be performed. APRA used this process in both replacing CNA as trustee of the three larger funds and also for the Small APRA Funds when CNA’s authority was revoked.

(5) Oak Breeze agreed with APRA in June of 2001 that the SAFs would be made compliant and that Oak Breeze would retire as acting trustee by 31 October 2001.

(6) and (7) Legal advice obtained by APRA and provided to Oak Breeze determined that migration of SAFs prior to the finalisation of claims for compensation under Part 23 of the SIS Act would render applications for assistance invalid. As a result there were no funds who either were compliant or who had migrated as at 31 October 2001. Currently, 409 funds are compliant.

(8) Competitive fees via the selection process were agreed with Oak Breeze based on hours worked. As the extent of rectification was not known at the time CNA was replaced, no limit could be established for fees for work to be done.
(9) No.
(10) Yes.
(11) Since June 2002, the Minister for Revenue and Assistant Treasurer has made over 723 determinations pursuant to section 229.

**Insurance: Public Liability**

(Question No. 367)

Ms Jann McFarlane asked the Minister representing the Minister for Revenue and Assistant Treasurer, upon notice, on 16 May 2002:

(1) What measures is the Commonwealth taking to address the current crisis in public liability insurance for community and sporting groups.

(2) What are the timeframes for implementation of Commonwealth measures.

(3) Do these measures provide any guarantee that public liability premiums will reduce in price.

(4) Under the proposed Commonwealth Government measures are there any direct controls over insurance companies to take into account an organisation’s claims history and risk management strategies.

(5) Will the Government take direct measures to combat the problem by setting up a uniform national insurance scheme; if not, why not.

(6) Will the Government take direct measures to set minimum standards for insurance claims through the introduction of an Insurance Claims Act; if not, why not.

(7) Will the Government amend the Insurance Contracts Act to require insurance companies to charge premiums that take into account an organisations risk management strategies and claims history; if not, why not.

(8) Will the Government restore the power in the Insurance Contracts Act which allowed a representative on behalf of members of the public to take legal action against insurance companies that ignored risk assessment strategies and claims histories on the grounds that they breached the duty of good faith, if not, why not.

Mr Costello—The Minister for Revenue and Assistant Treasurer has provided the following answer to the honourable member’s question.


(2) Details are outlined in the documents referred to in response to question one.

(3) The Government expects insurers to respond appropriately to ensure that the benefits generated from the reforms enacted by the Commonwealth, State and Territory governments are passed on to consumers.

The Government has asked the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission to update its Insurance Industry Market Pricing Review on a six monthly basis. Two more updates are expected.

(4) No.

(5) The Government is not attracted to the option of a national insurance scheme. The Government’s approach is to work with the States and Territories and other stakeholders to identify the factors driving up premiums and to address these with a comprehensive package of reforms.
(6) The Commonwealth, States and Territories have agreed to explore, for their respective jurisdictions, ways to improve procedures to encourage resolution of claims without resort to litigation. The Productivity Commission released its benchmarking report on Australian insurers’ claims management practices against world standards on 23 January 2003. The Commission concluded that competition in the public liability insurance sector is sufficient to ensure efficient and cost-effective claims management practices in Australia.

(7) No. The level of premiums charged for particular insurance policies and the basis on which those premiums are set are commercial decisions for individual insurers.

(8) The Government is not aware of a former provision that would provide private representatives with the rights referred to in the member’s question. However, in section 55A of the Act, the Australian Securities and Investments Commission is provided with the power to take representative actions on behalf of an insured in certain circumstances.

**Australian Prudential Regulation Authority**

(Question No. 372)

Ms Burke asked the Treasurer, upon notice, on 16 May 2002:

(1) What responsibility does the Australian Prudential Regulation Authority (APRA) have in ensuring the stability and prudential operation of individual providers within the insurance industry?

(2) What level of financial disclosure does APRA require of general insurers in discharging its responsibilities?

(3) What action, if any, is APRA empowered to take in regard to insurers that fail prudential standards?

(4) On what date did APRA become aware of the technical insolvency of United Medical Protection (UMP)?

(5) What action, if any, is APRA required to take upon becoming aware of the insolvency?

(6) What action did APRA take on becoming aware of any difficulties faced by UMP?

(7) If no action was taken by APRA relating to UMP in the period leading up to the voluntary appointment of administrators, has APRA adequately discharged its responsibilities?

Mr Costello—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) APRA’s responsibilities are set out in the Australian Prudential Regulation Authority Act (1998) (APRA Act) and in the legislation it administers, including the Insurance Act 1973.

(2) APRA requires that general insurers subject to its jurisdiction comply with the reporting and other requirements as set out in the legislation administered by APRA, including the Financial Sector (Collection of Data) Act 2001, which sets out entities’ responsibilities in providing data to APRA.

(3) APRA’s powers are specified in the Insurance Act 1973.

(4), (5), (6) and (7) UMP is neither licensed nor regulated by APRA.

**Australian Prudential Regulation Authority**

(Question No. 374)

Ms Burke asked the Treasurer, upon notice, on 16 May 2002:

(1) What investigations have been undertaken by the Australian Prudential Regulation Authority (APRA) into the operations of providers of professional indemnity insurance?

(2) On what dates did these investigations occur?
(3) Were investigations of a similar nature undertaken into United Medical Protection (UMP); and if so, on what dates did they take place?

(4) On what date did APRA become aware of the prudential difficulties being faced by UMP?

(5) On what date was he advised of the difficulties faced by UMP?

(6) Does he maintain confidence in the operations of APRA as they relate to UMP?

Mr Costello—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1), (2) APRA monitors those institutions that it regulates under the Insurance Act 1973 on an ongoing basis.

(3), (4),(5) and (6) UMP is neither licensed nor regulated by APRA.

**Australian Taxation Office: Staff**

(Question No. 412)

Ms Burke asked the Treasurer, upon notice, on 28 May 2002:

(1) How many Full Time Equivalent staff did the Australian Taxation Office (ATO) have in (a) 1995, (b) 1996, (c) 1997, (d) 1998, (e) 1999, (f) 2000, (g) 2001 and (h) 2002 in Victoria.

(2) How many ATO office locations were there in (a) 1995, (b) 1996, (c) 1997, (d) 1998, (e) 1999, (f) 2000, (g) 2001 and (h) 2002 in Victoria.

(3) How many of the offices listed in part (2) provided or provide face to face assistance to taxpayers in (a) 1995, (b) 1996, (c) 1997, (d) 1998, (e) 1999, (f) 2000, (g) 2001 and (h) 2002.

(4) How many GST dedicated staff were employed in the ATO in (a) 2000, (b) 2001 and (c) 2002.

Mr Costello—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) Staff numbers by region are published in Annual Reports (p189 of 2001-02 Annual Report).

(2) and (3) ATO addresses are published in annual Reports (p319 2001-2002 Annual Report)

(4) Staff attributed to GST activities across Australia totalled in the following financial years were:

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<th>Financial Year</th>
<th>Staff Total</th>
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<td>2001-2002</td>
<td>4,900</td>
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**Police Federation of Australia: Superannuation Surcharge**

(Question No. 478)

Mr Fitzgibbon asked the Minister representing the Minister for Revenue and Assistant Treasurer, upon notice, on 5 June 2002:

(1) Has the Minister’s attention been drawn to the impact the doubling of the notional employer contributions this year by the Police Superannuation Scheme actuary, due to the increased number of NSW Police being medically discharged after sustaining recognised hurt on duty injuries, is having on the NSW Police?

(2) Why are police being taxed as high income earners as a ramification of their colleagues who have been medically discharged due to being injured at work?

(3) Why does this anomaly exist where the workers compensation for affected NSW police is included under the federal superannuation taxation regime?

(4) Will the Government take steps to address this important issue and rectify the anomaly that unfairly affects NSW Police?
Mr Costello—The Minister for Revenue and Assistant Treasurer has provided the following answer to the honourable member’s question:

(1) Members of the Police Federation of Australia (PFA) have stated that the level of surchargeable contributions has increased as a result of an increase in the payments of ‘hurt on duty’ benefits provided by their superannuation fund.

(2) to (4). I am unable to comment on the specific circumstances of taxpayers or their superannuation funds. Regarding the application of the superannuation surcharge, surchargeable contributions include superannuation contributions made by the individual’s employer, personal contributions for which the member has claimed a tax deduction, and certain components of rolled over eligible termination payments. For a defined benefit fund, they are the actuarial value of the benefits that accrued to, and the value of the administration expenses and risk benefits provided in respect of, the member for the financial year. A member’s own contributions, for which no tax deduction was allowed, are excluded for surcharge purposes.

The ‘hurt on duty’ allowance is a risk benefit similar to, for example, the death and disability benefit provided by many defined benefit schemes. As such, it is appropriate that the ‘hurt on duty’ allowance is included in the calculation of surchargeable contributions.

It is the Government’s policy to reduce the maximum surcharge rate to 10.5 per cent over three years. The Government is also committed to reviewing the surcharge arrangements in three years time to determine whether any further changes are required.

Health: Indemnity Insurance
(Question No. 557)

Mr Gibbons asked the Minister representing the Minister for Revenue and Assistant Treasurer, upon notice, on 19 June 2002:

(1) What steps are being taken to ensure that private midwives have access to affordable insurance indemnity cover, thereby allowing them to continue practising their profession.

(2) When will the Government introduce measures to alleviate problems that large sections of the community are experiencing with exorbitant indemnity insurance.

Mr Costello—The Minister for Revenue and Assistant Treasurer has provided the following answer to the honourable member’s question:

(1) and (2) The Minister for Revenue and Assistant Treasurer, Senator the Hon Helen Coonan, has convened five meetings with her State and Territory colleagues to address the availability and affordability of insurance. The agreements reached at these meetings could be expected to have implications for those professionals seeking professional indemnity insurance, including midwives. Ministers have considered the recommendations of the Review of the Law of Negligence. This report makes recommendations on professional negligence, the principles of negligence and the quantum of damages to be awarded arising from personal injury. Ministers have agreed to move to a nationally consistent law of negligence and a package of reforms implementing key recommendations of the Review.

The Commonwealth is taking a leadership role in the reform of tort law. However, reform in this area is the primary responsibility of the States and Territories.

Ministers have also agreed to consider the development of a nationally consistent model for proportionate liability for economic loss and the implications and mechanisms for developing a nationally consistent approach to professional standards legislation as a means of addressing problems surrounding professional indemnity insurance.
In addition, the Australian Health Ministers’ Advisory Council (AHMAC) Medical Indemnity Working Party has made recommendations that could be expected to impact on professional indemnity premiums for midwives. The States and Territories are also considering whether to implement these recommendations.

**Superannuation: Entitlements**
* (Question No. 615)

Mr Martin Ferguson asked the Minister representing the Minister for Revenue and Assistant Treasurer upon notice, on 26 June 2002:

1. How many people currently in receipt of superannuation are estimated as potentially losing their superannuation entitlements as a result of the proposal by the Government to change the minimum wage eligible for the Superannuation Guarantee from $450 a month to $1350 a quarter.

2. On which industries does the Government expect the changes in superannuation entitlements to impact most.

3. Has the Government considered the estimated impact of the changes in superannuation entitlements on female workers.

Mr Costello—The Minister for Revenue and Assistant Treasurer has provided the following answer to the honourable member’s question:

1, 2 and 3. On 27 June 2002, the Government accepted an amendment to the Taxation Laws Amendment (Superannuation) Bill (No. 2) 2002 to remove the adjustment in the income threshold below which Superannuation Guarantee contributions are not payable and as a result the passage of this Bill did not alter the threshold.

**Immigration: Asylum Seekers**
* (Question No. 639)

Ms Gillard asked the Minister for Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs, upon notice, on 19 August 2002:

1. How many departmental case officers were employed assessing applications from asylum seekers in each year from 1990 to 2001, inclusive.

2. How many applications were assessed in each year.

3. What was the country of origin of applicants, detailed for each year.

4. On average, how long did each case take to be assessed.

5. Can part (4) be broken down by country of origin; if so, what are the details for each year.

Mr Ruddock—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

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<th>Year</th>
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<th>Additional Trained officers</th>
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<td>1998-99</td>
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</table>
Changes to Departmental structure, refugee processing arrangements and reporting systems over time make it difficult to accurately provide the staffing figure requested for the years 1990-91 and 1991-92. However, records indicate that the major changes to refugee processing arrangements in late 1990 were accompanied by recruitment of some 160 officers to process asylum seeker claims.

Case manager numbers for later years from Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs (DIMIA) records from 1992-93 to 2001-02 are shown in Table A above.

In 1998-99 there were 37 case managers, reflecting the relatively low numbers of applications for protection visas being lodged. In 1999-00 there were 89 case managers and in 2000-01 there were 100 case managers together with 37 additional fully trained staff available on call to assist in the processing of the caseload. At the end of 2001-02 there were 67 trained and operational case managers throughout Australia working on refugee assessment with a further 61 officers in other areas of the Department trained and available to undertake protection visa work to meet workload fluctuations.

As part of the response to the major influx of boat arrivals in 1999 DIMIA recruited additional staff to process asylum claims. DIMIA also established a contingency reserve consisting of trained officers from other areas of the Department who could be deployed to supplement asylum processing capacity as needed. The staff numbers for this group are set out in the right-hand column in Table A.

(2) and (3) Table B provides the numbers of applications processed at primary stage broken down by nationality for program years 1990-91 through to and including 2001-02.

### Primary Decisions by Year Table B

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**QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**
Nationality

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Chart A below shows trends in the numbers of decisions made each year and the numbers of case officers employed.

In 1994-95, 218 case officers processed 12,044 applications, an average of 55 applications per case manager per year. By the end of the 1990s a much higher average number of decisions per case manager per year was being achieved.
Table C provides the average time taken in days to process applications at primary stage broken down by nationality for program years 1990-91 through to and including 2001-02. Note: this table does not exclude delays which are beyond DIMIA’s control, such as those caused by lack of cooperation by applicants or the need for character or security checks.

### Average Primary Decision Time by Year Table C

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My department has been constantly reviewing, streamlining and strengthening the protection visa process to ensure speedy and rigorous processing of protection visa applications. For example, steps taken in response to the surge in unauthorised boat arrivals in recent years include:

- as early as possible after the individual enters detention, commissioning checks for identity/nationality fraud (including where practicable through language analysis), and re-entry and residence rights in other countries;
- integrating security checking work into initial interviews on arrival of the individual in detention;
- establishing streamlined medical checking arrangements as soon as the individual enters detention (these checks are needed should a visa grant be contemplated);
- overhauling arrangements for deployment of Immigration Advice and Application Assistance Scheme (IAAAS) providers and protection visa decision makers to Immigration Reception and Processing Centres (IRPCs) ensuring speedy high volume processing of refugee claims;
- providing specialised training and detailed country research to case managers to support speedy and reliable decision making; and
- ensuring sufficient numbers of suitably trained case managers were available at all times to process boat arrivals as a priority and without delay.

Delays beyond a few weeks are due mainly to factors outside the control of DIMIA and the Australian Government such as the disposal of identity documentation by asylum seekers en route to Australia.

Chart B below draws on the data provided in Table C above and in the answer to part (1) to show changes to case manager numbers and the time taken to process decisions. The average time taken to process decisions fell markedly in the second half of the 1990s, reflecting the processing efficiencies achieved through that period. The large surge in boat arrivals commencing in 1999-00 had only minimal impact on average processing times. These remained conspicuously below the peak of the early 1990s.
Mr Murphy asked the Treasurer, upon notice, on 26 August 2002:

(1) Is question No. 36 which appeared on 13 February 2002 on the first Notice Paper of the 40th Parliament the same question No. 2478 which first appeared on the Notice Paper of 28 March 2001 during the 39th Parliament.

(2) Did he receive a letter from the Speaker following my request to the Speaker on 29 August 2001 to write to him seeking an early reply to question No. 2478 under standing order 150.

(3) Did he receive a further letter from the Speaker following my request to the Speaker on 14 May 2002 to again write to him seeking an answer to question No. 36 under standing order 150.

(4) Did he receive yet another letter from the Speaker following yet another request by me to the Speaker on 19 August 2002 to write to him seeking an answer to question No. 36 under standing order 150.

(5) When will he answer question No. 36.

Mr Costello—The Treasurer has provided the following answer to the honourable member’s question:

See response to QON 36 which appeared in Hansard, 10 February 2003, page 537.

Mr Murphy asked the Treasurer, upon notice, on 26 August 2002:

(1) Is question No. 37 which appeared on 13 February 2002 on the first Notice Paper of the 40th Parliament the same question No. 2657 which first appeared on the Notice Paper of 6 June 2001 during the 39th Parliament.

(2) Did he receive a letter from the Speaker following my request to the Speaker on 29 August 2001 to write to him seeking an early reply to question No. 2657 under standing order 150.

(3) Did he receive a further letter from the Speaker following my request to the Speaker on 14 May 2002 to again write to him seeking an answer to question No. 37 under standing order 150.

(4) Did he receive yet another letter from the Speaker following yet another request by me to the Speaker on 19 August 2002 to write to him seeking an answer to question No. 37 under standing order 150.

(5) When will he answer question No. 37.

Mr Costello—The Treasurer has provided the following answer to the honourable member’s question:

See response to QON 37 which appeared in Hansard, 10 February 2003, page 537.

Mr Murphy asked the Treasurer, upon notice, on 26 August 2002:


(2) Did he receive a letter from the Speaker following my request to the Speaker on 29 August 2001 to write to him seeking an early reply to question No. 2766 under standing order 150.
(3) Did he receive a further letter from the Speaker following my request to the Speaker on 14 May 2002 to again write to him seeking an answer to question No. 40 under standing order 150. No. 37—26 August 2002 1059

(4) Did he receive yet another letter from the Speaker following yet another request by me to the Speaker on 19 August 2002 to write to him seeking an answer to question No. 40 under standing order 150.

(5) When will he answer question No. 40.

Mr Costello—The Treasurer has provided the following answer to the honourable member’s question:

See response to QON 40 which appeared in Hansard, 13 February 2003, page 889.

Banking: Credit Card Fees

(Question No. 912)

Mrs Crosio asked the Treasurer, upon notice, on 16 September 2002:

(1) Following the Reserve Bank of Australia’s recently proposed reform of the credit card system, what is the maximum surcharge a merchant is able to charge for credit card transactions.

(2) What jurisdiction and powers does the Government or the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission have to regulate and limit surcharge fees charged on credit card transactions and interchange fees.

(3) Has the Government any guarantee that the reforms will not result in merchants charging surcharges of (a) 10%, (b) 20% or (c) 30% or higher for credit card use.

Mr Costello—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) There is no maximum surcharge for this purpose. However, experience in the United Kingdom (UK), where surcharging has been available to merchants since 1991, is that surcharging is not widespread and only to the level that allows merchants to cover the cost of providing credit card services.

(2) The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC), under the Trade Practices Act 1974, has general responsibility for ensuring that both banks and merchants do not collude in the setting of prices and fees. The ACCC can also monitor prices, if directed by the Minister, under the Prices Surveillance Act 1983.

(3) No. There is no reason to expect that Australian merchants will surcharge for credit card transactions in a different way to that of UK merchants (see answer to question 1). Merchants have been able to surcharge for Bankcard transactions since 1980 but few have done so.

International Criminal Court: Nominations

(Question No. 1306)

Mr Rudd asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs, upon notice, on 4 February 2003:

(1) Is it a fact that among the 45 countries to nominate for the bench of the International Criminal Court (ICC) were nominations from the Democratic Republic of Congo, Cambodia, Nigeria, Mongolia, Mali and the United Republic of Tanzania.

(2) Was there any person in Australia worthy of a nomination to the bench of the ICC.

(3) What was the basis on which the Government decided against submitting a nomination to the Bench of the ICC.

(4) Did the Government submit a nomination for the position of Chief Prosecutor to the ICC.
(5) Does the Government believe that it has a better chance of getting the position of Chief Prosecutor rather than the position of Judge to the ICC; if so, why.

(6) What lobbying efforts did Australia engage in to have its nomination for Chief Prosecutor succeed.

(7) What sum was spent on the campaign for the position of Chief Prosecutor.

(8) Did Australia enter into informal or other agreements to support nominations of other countries for the position of Judge to the ICC; if so, with which countries and for what was this support in exchange.

(9) Was this support conditional on support being received for Australia’s nomination for the position of Chief Prosecutor.

Mr Downer—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) Yes.

(2) The Government gave priority to finding an Australian candidate for Prosecutor.

(3) The Government decided Australia could better contribute to the establishment of the ICC by proposing a candidate for Prosecutor, a critical role within the Court.

(4) The Government informally proposed a senior Australian lawyer for Prosecutor. The President of the ICC Assembly of States Parties, Prince Zeid, informally consulted with ICC States Parties to secure a consensus candidate for the position. In accordance with Prince Zeid’s preferred process and to facilitate his consultations, Australia did not formally submit a nomination for Prosecutor.

(5) Yes. The Government chose not to run candidates for both judge and the Prosecutor. The Government chose to nominate a candidate for Prosecutor, particularly because the Prosecutor will fulfil a crucial role within the Court.

(6) In accordance with Prince Zeid’s preferred process, the Government, like other governments with candidates, did not formally lobby on behalf of its candidate for Prosecutor. However, Australia’s candidate did travel to New York to meet with Prince Zeid.

(7) The Government spent approximately $11,100.

(8) The Government agreed to support Canada’s candidate, Ambassador Philippe Kirsch, as an endorsed Canada-Australia-New Zealand candidate. Although the Government notified other relevant States of our support for their judicial candidates, no agreements were entered into with those States.

(9) Not applicable.

Taxation: Mass Marketed Schemes

(Question No. 1586)

Ms Jann McFarlane asked the Treasurer, upon notice, on 6 March 2003:

(1) Further to your answer to question No. 155 (Hansard, 11 February 2003, page 11559) is he able to say whether the Australian Taxation Office (ATO) keeps records that are easily accessible on computer about the matters it deals with.

(2) Does the ATO prepare management reports on the performance of its divisions that deal with the timeframe of cases that it deals with; if so, would these management reports contain information that would assist in easily answering question No. 155; if not, what type of records are generated to measure its internal performance.

(3) Why the many parts of question No. 155, which can be answered “yes” or “no”, would require a significant diversion of resources to collate the information.

(4) Will he provide the House with an indication of the level of resources or cost that would be required to answer question No. 155.
(5) Can he explain why it took over 12 months to state that he was not prepared to answer the specifics in question No. 155.

**Mr Costello**—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

See my response to QON 155 which appeared in *Hansard*, 11 February 2003, page 11559. I have nothing further to add.

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**Indonesia: Terrorist Attacks**

(Question No. 1606)

**Mr Danby** asked the Treasurer, upon notice, on 6 March 2003:

(1) Is he aware of reports, including those on Foreign Correspondent on ABC TV on 4 March 2003, that a Saudi Arabian charity was responsible for funding the terrorist attacks in Bali in October 2002.

(2) Has he raised the question of funding of Jemaah Islamiah (JI) and the Bali attacks with the Saudi or Indonesian government; if so, what was the result of those representations.

(3) Is he aware of any money from individuals, corporations or charities in Australia going to the Al-Haramain charity in Saudi Arabia, which is suspected of funding terrorism; if so (a) does the group have any representatives or offices in Australia, and (b) does the group have any connection with any organisations or individuals in Australia.

(4) Has the Minister heard of the World Assembly of Moslem Youth, which is also suspected of funding terrorism; if so, (a) does the Assembly have any representatives or offices in Australia, and (b) does the Assembly have any connection with any organisations or individuals in Australia.

(5) Is he aware of any money from individuals, corporations or charities in Australia going to the Assembly

**Mr Costello**—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

These questions do not fall within my portfolio responsibilities.

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**Transport and Regional Services: Client Services Charter**

(Question No. 1611)

**Ms Corcoran** asked the Minister for Transport and Regional Services, upon notice, on 18 March 2003:

(1) Does the Vehicle Safety Standards Branch of his Department have a client service charter; if so, what is it and what penalties, action or processes apply, or are taken, if a member of the public alleges or proves that the client service charter has been breached with respect to their treatment by a Departmental officer.

(2) What action is taken by him or his office when a member of the public alleges or proves to him that his Department’s client service charter has been breached by an officer and who is responsible if that action is not taken.

(3) What action is taken by the Secretary of the Department of Transport and Regional Services when a member of the public alleges and proves to him that the Department’s client service charter has been breached by an officer and who is responsible if that action is not taken.

(4) Has any action been taken by him, his office or the Secretary of the Department in relation to allegations by Mr Colin G Young that certain officers have seriously breached the client service charter; if not, why not.

(5) Did an officer of the Department of Transport and Regional Services send a copy of a highly-confidential letter addressed to Mr Young to any individual, company or organisation who had no
reason to know the contents of the letter; if so (a) who, (b) why and (c) did that officer have Mr Young’s permission to do so; if not, why not.

(6) Further to paragraph 5, if a letter was sent, on whose behalf and/or on whose authority did that officer take that action, and why.

(7) In respect to information posted on the Department of Transport and Regional Services Road Vehicle Certification Scheme website in relation to vehicle approval issues: can that information (a) be taken as being true and correct; if not, why not, (b) what is the purpose of having that vital information displayed when it is used in relation to registering motor vehicles, and (c) what is the status of that information and have readers and users of that information always been so advised; if not, why not.

(8) Do all Honda CR-V and Nissan X-trail motor vehicles comply with all Australian Design Rules relating to vehicle lighting; if not, why not.

(9) Will all full-volume ADR 73/00-complianced vehicles that do not have a pictogram that is in precise accordance with that specified in the ADR be recalled and rectified; if not, why not.

(10) Can a Compliance Plate Approval held by a company at the time it is wound up, put into liquidation or ceases to trade, be transferred to another newly-formed company formed by the proprietor/director of the former company; has he and the Administrator consistently refused to answer this simple yes/no question; if so, why.

(11) What avenues of redress or appeal are available to members of the public with a grievance about their treatment by, or decisions taken, by officers in the Vehicle Standards Section of the Department of Transport and Regional Services.

(12) Did an officer of the Department of Transport and Regional Services send, via fax, an advance copy of a registered mail letter from the Administrator addressed to Mr Young, to any individual, company or organisation, who had no reason to know the contents of the letter, and if so (a) who, (b) why and (c) did that officer have the permission of Mr Young to do so; if not, why not.

(13) Did an officer of the Department of Transport and Regional Services ask Mr Young’s office for Mr Young’s home address; if so, (a) what legal and ethical reason in relation to the officers duties with the Department did the officer have for doing so, and (b) why was this officer permitted to remain involved with matters concerning Mr Young and his colleagues and clients, when extremely grave complaints, involving breaches of privacy and confidentiality, lying and defamation, had been laid against the officer.

(14) What avenues of redress or appeal are available to members of the public with a grievance about serious breaches of the Australian Public Service and Senior Executive Service Values and Code of Conduct by officers in the Vehicle Standards Section of the Department of Transport and Regional Services and is he aware of complaints of heinous breaches by officers, including the Administrator; if so, what action has he taken to address these matters.

(15) Has he received letters from Mr Young regarding allegations of serious breaches by officers of his Department; if so, (a) on what date(s) were they received, (b) what date(s) did he respond and (c) if he has not responded, why not.

(16) Did the Administrator receive a notification of a suspected serious ADR safety violation involving a power-window exerting too much force in respect to a large-selling fully-complianced motor vehicle; if so, what action was taken and, if no action was taken, why not.

(17) Can he confirm that the Vehicle Standards Administrator has consistently refused to answer a number of serious items raised by Mr Young; if so, when did he become aware of this and when will he ensure that all matters raised are responded to.
(18) Can he confirm that the Vehicle Standards Administrator, when investigating complaints that an officer had publicly stated that Mr Young and four of his colleagues/clients had a conspiracy to illegally import and register motor vehicles, had (a) produced an important document that was alleged to be obviously fraudulent when in fact it was printed from the Vehicle Safety Standards internet site, (b) asked only the officer for his comments and (c) did not ask any of the five aggrieved parties for their comments or to see the statutory declarations that had been prepared.

(19) Can he confirm that the Administrator advised him and/or his office, either directly or indirectly, that the above complaints had been investigated and found to be unsubstantiated.

(20) Did he or his office ensure that this investigation by the Administrator was thorough, professional, transparent and in accordance with all the applicable Values, Codes of Conduct, Charters and principles of natural-justice; if not, why not and what action will he now take as a consequence.

(21) Can he confirm that Compliance Plate Approval application 29674 was received on 6 September 2002; if so, (a) what action has been taken to date to process it, (b) if no action has been taken, is this consistent with the standard timeframes for handling such applications; if not, what is the reason for the delay.

(22) Does the law provide that while certain vehicles do not have to comply with certain ADRs (because of their date of manufacture), they nevertheless must comply with certain aspects of those ADRs; if so, did the Administrator refuse to provide Mr Young with details of the law; if the law does not so provide, why does the Vehicle Standards Section insist that those vehicles do have to comply.

(23) How many complaints and/or grievances have been made against the Vehicle Standards Section in each of the past five years and how much has it cost to attend to them.

(24) How many Freedom of Information requests have been lodged for information held by the Vehicle Standards Section in each of the last five years and how much has it cost to process them.

(25) How many Administrative Appeals Tribunal appeals have been lodged against decisions or actions of the Vehicle Standards Section in each of the past five years, what has been the outcome of each appeal and what has been the cost to the Department, or any other Commonwealth Department, of each appeal.

Mr Anderson—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) to (3) The Department of Transport and Regional Services has a client service charter. Where a member of the public claims that the charter has not been followed, it is a matter for the Secretary to the Department to investigate and respond. The Secretary would take whatever action he or she considers to be appropriate in the circumstances.

(4) to (7) and (12) to (20) relate to a series of complaints by Mr Colin G Young. They are matters of administration and have been investigated through the appropriate process, including the Ombudsman and Privacy Commissioner. I do not propose to comment on those questions.

(8) All vehicles that have been fitted with identification plates pursuant to an approval issued under section 10A(1) of the Motor Vehicle Standards Act 1989 are required to comply with all applicable Australian Design Rules (ADRs). The vehicle manufacturer must submit evidence of test results to verify ADR compliance before an approval is issued. This applies to relevant Honda CR-V and Nissan X-Trail vehicles. The Department has no information to suggest that the relevant vehicles, when supplied new to the Australian market, would not comply with the ADRs relating to vehicle lighting.

(9) The Department is unaware of any vehicles that are required to comply with ADR 73/00 that do not have a pictogram that is in accordance with the ADR.

(10) The Administrator of Vehicle Standards has provided a response to Mr Young on this issue.
(11) Depending on the nature of the action or decision, redress or appeal could be available from the Administrator of Vehicle Standards, the Secretary to the Department, the Ombudsman, the Administrative Appeals Tribunal, the Minister or the court system.

(21) Yes. I am advised that delays in processing the application have been due to further information being required from the applicant.

(22) The Administrator of Vehicle Standards has responded to Mr Young on this issue.

(23) Given the nature of the regulatory task that is performed by the Vehicle Safety Standards Branch, it is not feasible to keep a numerical tally of all compliments, complaints or grievances that are received. No information is available on the cost of investigating complaints or grievances.

(24) The following table lists Freedom of Information requests received and processed for Vehicle Safety Standards Branch.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period (FY)</th>
<th>No of Requests</th>
<th>Range of costs quoted to proceed with each request</th>
<th>No of Requests which proceeded</th>
<th>Total actual charges imposed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1998-1999</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>$135-$175</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>$447.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999-2000</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>$76-$13,610</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>$171.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000-2001</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>$30-$1,844</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>$190.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001-2002</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>$27-$385</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>$1,407.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002-2003 (YTD)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>$25-$12,000</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>$194.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(25) Records of Administrative Appeals Tribunal appeals relating to decisions of the Administrator of Vehicle Standards have been recorded for almost three years. In that period 33 appeals were lodged. The administrator’s decisions have been upheld in 28 cases. Of the remainder, one appeal has been successful, another has an appeal pending, and three are yet to be heard. Costs have not been recorded.

**Defence: HMAS Kanimbla**

(1) Has the Australian Defence Force or the Department of Defence hired Phillips Fox as its legal Counsel in the WA Medical Board of Inquiry into the doctor aboard HMAS Kanimbla?

(2) Is Phillips Fox also acting in the related matters before the Defence Ombudsman and the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission?

(3) Has the Medical Board of WA outlined the particulars of a case against the doctor on board HMAS Kanimbla; if so, when and what are they.

(4) Were the particulars provided before or after approval was given for the doctor to deploy.

Mrs Vale—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) No. Defence is not a party to the WA Medical Board inquiry.

(2) Phillips Fox is representing Defence in respect of the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission inquiry.

(3) Yes. The board has issued several versions of its initiating document. The most recent is “Substituted Notice of Inquiry (No.2)” dated 9 January 2003. The content of the Substituted Notice is confidential between doctor and the Board.

(4) Defence is not aware of the date on which the Substituted Notice No 2 was served on the doctor or his legal representatives.
Defence: HMAS Kanimbla
(Question No. 1676)

Mr Price asked the Minister Assisting the Minister for Defence, upon notice, on 19 March 2003:

(1) As at 12 March 2003, had all papers, files, records and information requested by the WA Medical Board of Inquiry been provided to the Board by the Australian Defence Force (ADF) and/or the Department’s legal representatives; if not, why not?

(2) Has she or will she direct the ADF and/or the Department and their legal representatives to fully cooperate with the WA Medical Board of Inquiry.

(3) As at 12 March 2003, had all papers, files, records and information requested by the Defence Ombudsman and the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, in their investigations of complaints against the doctor on board HMAS Kanimbla, been provided to them by the ADF and/or the Department’s legal representatives; if not, why not.

(4) Has she or will she direct the ADF and/or the Department to fully cooperate with the Defence Ombudsman and the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission investigations.

(5) Can she confirm that the WA Medical Board of Inquiry had tentatively set down a five day hearing for October 2003 to consider complaints against the doctor on board HMAS Kanimbla.

Mrs Vale—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) Yes.

(2) Although the Commonwealth is not a party to the proceedings before the WA Medical Board inquiry, consistent with the Attorney-General’s Legal Service Directions, Defence will render all appropriate assistance to the Board.

(3) Defence has not received any request from the Defence Force Ombudsman. Defence has provided the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission all appropriate material.

(4) Defence provides all appropriate assistance to Defence Force Ombudsman and Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission.

(5) No.

Environment and Heritage: Program Funding
(Question No. 1691)

Ms Hoare asked the Minister for the Environment and Heritage, upon notice, on 19 March 2003:

(1) Does the Minister’s Department administer any Commonwealth funded programs for which community organisations, businesses or individuals in the electoral division of Charlton can apply for funding; if so, what are the programs.

(2) Does the Minister’s Department advertise these funding opportunities; if so (a) what print or other media outlets have been used for the advertising of each of these programs, (b) were these paid advertisements, and if so, (c) what was the cost of each advertisement.

(3) With respect to each of the Commonwealth funded programs referred to in part (1), (a) what is its purpose and (b) who is responsible for allocating funds.

(4) With respect to each of the Commonwealth funded programs referred to in part (1), how many (a) community organisations, (b) businesses or (c) individuals in the electoral division of Charlton received funding in (i) 1999, (ii) 2000, (iii) 2001, and (iv) 2002.
(5) What is the name and address of each recipient.

**Dr Kemp**—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) and (3) Yes. See details for questions 1 and 3 in the following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Program</th>
<th>Purpose of Program</th>
<th>Who allocates funds?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alternative Fuels Conversion Program</td>
<td>To reduce greenhouse emissions and improve urban air quality by facilitating: the conversion of heavy vehicles (i.e. buses and commercial road vehicles with gross vehicle mass of 3.5 tonnes or more) to operate on compressed natural gas (CNG) and liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) fuels; upgrades to the fuel systems of heavy vehicles already operating on CNG and LPG; and the purchase of new heavy vehicles operating on CNG and LPG.</td>
<td>Minister for the Environment and Heritage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australian Biological Resources Study (ABRS)</td>
<td>To provide the taxonomic information necessary for the conservation and sustainable use of Australia’s biodiversity. The aim of the ABRS Participatory Program Research Grant scheme is to support the documentation of Australia’s biological diversity and to improve and increase the national taxonomic effort. The intent of the scheme is to support rigorous taxonomic treatment at a species level and work contributing to regional or continental generic or higher level reviews, including the development of identification tools.</td>
<td>Minister for the Environment and Heritage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental Education Grants Program and Funding Grants to Voluntary Environment &amp; Heritage Organisations</td>
<td>To assist organisations and individuals involved in activities that support the achievement of the Commonwealth Government’s objectives of the National Action Plan for Environmental Education.</td>
<td>Minister for the Environment and Heritage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greenhouse Gas Abatement Program (GGAP)</td>
<td>To target opportunities for large-scale, cost-effective and sustained abatement across the economy. GGAP only supports projects that result in quantifiable and additional abatement not expected to occur in the absence of GGAP funding. Priority is given to projects that are expected to deliver abatement exceeding 250,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalents (CO2-e) per annum. Projects that do not meet this threshold but meet other criteria to a high degree may be selected.</td>
<td>Ministers for Environment and Heritage &amp; Industry Tourism and Resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Reserve System Program</td>
<td>To provide grants to purchase land and or apply covenants throughout Australia to assist with the establishment of a comprehensive, adequate and representative national reserve system. Grants are provided to State and Territory conservation agencies, local governments and appropriate NGO groups. It is a Natural Heritage Trust program.</td>
<td>Minister for the Environment and Heritage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name of Program</td>
<td>Purpose of Program</td>
<td>Who allocates funds?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural Heritage Trust</td>
<td>The Natural Heritage Trust was established in 1997 to help to restore and conserve Australia’s environment and natural resources. Since then, thousands of community groups have received funding for environmental and natural resource management projects. In the 2001 Federal Budget, the Government announced an additional $1 billion for the Trust, extending the funding for five more years and ensuring the future of many important ongoing activities. Funds are available for environmental activities at the local community level, the regional level and the National/State level.</td>
<td>Joint allocation of funds by the Ministers for Environment and Heritage and Agriculture, Fisheries and Forests.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ozone Protection Reserve - Grants</td>
<td>The Ozone Protection Act 1989 provides that revenue raised from Quarterly Activity fees is to be used for funding phase-out and public awareness programs for HCFCs and methyl bromide (including the promotion of alternatives).</td>
<td>Minister for the Environment and Heritage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photovoltaic Rebate Program</td>
<td>To encourage the long-term use of photovoltaic technology to generate electricity from sunlight and increase the use of renewable energy in Australia.</td>
<td>The uptake of funding is dependent on applications received. The program is managed in New South Wales by the Sustainable Energy Development Authority.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Product Stewardship Arrangements for Waste Oil – Transitional Assistance Element</td>
<td>To provide economic incentives to increase the uptake and appropriate recycling and use of waste oil; and encourage the environmentally sustainable management and re-refining of waste oil and its reuse, and; support economic recycling options for waste oil.</td>
<td>Minister for the Environment and Heritage</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(2) See following table.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Program</th>
<th>Is Program advertised: Yes or No</th>
<th>Name/s of print or media outlets used to advertise program</th>
<th>Paid Ads: Yes or No</th>
<th>What is the cost of each advertisement?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alternative Fuels Conversion Program</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Australian Greenhouse Office Website; Industry liaison and seminars; Australasian Transport News; Australasian Bus and Coach; Transport and Machinery; Government Administrators Sourcebooks for NSW/ACT and Victoria; Australian Financial Review; The Weekend Australian; Sydney Morning Herald; Canberra Times; Melbourne Age; Brisbane Courier Mail; Adelaide Advertiser; The West Australian; The Hobart Mercury; The Northern Territory News. Weekday Australian; Australian Biological Resources Study Website.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>$23,249.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australian Biological Resources Study</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Environment Australia Website.</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>$4764.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental Education Grants Program and Funding</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Australian; Sydney Morning Herald; Age; Mercury; Courier Mail; NT News; West Australian; Advertiser; Canberra Times</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>$15,797</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grants to Voluntary Environment &amp; Heritage Organisations</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Rounds 1 and 2 were advertised in the following newspapers: Financial Review, The Australian, Sydney Morning Herald, Canberra Times, Melbourne Age, Brisbane Courier Mail, Adelaide Advertiser, Perth West Australian, Hobart Mercury, Northern Territory News Round 1 was advertised in July 2000. Round 2 was advertised in April and May 2001. In addition to the newspaper advertisements, notification of approaching rounds was put up on the AGO website at <a href="http://www.greenhouse.gov.au/ggap/index.html">http://www.greenhouse.gov.au/ggap/index.html</a></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Approx. $30,000 each round</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greenhouse Gas Abatement Program</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Reserve System Program</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In addition to the information in the preceding table, every year since 1998, the Federal Government has advertised the availability of funding under the Natural Heritage Trust. This advertising has been conducted nationally to ensure that all Australians are aware of the program.

Natural Heritage Trust

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>1998-99</th>
<th>1999-00</th>
<th>2000-01</th>
<th>2001-02</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(i) television</td>
<td>$1,740,000</td>
<td>$2,515,000</td>
<td>$3,494,891</td>
<td>$2,090,290</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ii) outdoor</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(iii) radio</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>$43,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(iv) print</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>$120,000</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>$484,195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(v) Internet</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>$32,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(4) and (5)

(a) Community organisations | 4
(b) Businesses | 1
(c) Individuals | Nil

Please see the following table for further details.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Organisation</th>
<th>Address of Organisation</th>
<th>Type of Organisation - community organisation or business or individual</th>
<th>Program Title</th>
<th>Funding Amount - 1999</th>
<th>Funding Amount - 2000</th>
<th>Funding Amount - 2001</th>
<th>Funding Amount - 2002</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Centre for Research on Ecological Impacts of Coastal Cities Department of Land and Water Conservation</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>Tertiary Institution</td>
<td>Coastal biodiversity, climate change and state of the environment</td>
<td>$57,200</td>
<td>$47,200</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gosford City Council</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>State Agency</td>
<td>Central Coast Regional Devolved Grant</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>$30,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great Lakes Council</td>
<td>PO Box 450 FORSTER NSW 2428</td>
<td>Local Government</td>
<td>Gosford Coastal Open Space System Biodiversity Component</td>
<td>$333,333</td>
<td>$333,333</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hunter Catchment Management Trust</td>
<td>Private Bag 2010 PATERSON NSW 2421</td>
<td>Regional Organisation</td>
<td>Hunter and Central Coast Regional NREM Support System</td>
<td>$30,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hunter Catchment Management Trust</td>
<td>Private Bag 2010 PATERSON NSW 2421</td>
<td>Regional Organisation</td>
<td>Coordination of Catchment Community Programs - Hunter Region</td>
<td>$20,000</td>
<td>$20,000</td>
<td>$20,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hunter Catchment Management Trust</td>
<td>Private Bag 2010 PATERSON NSW 2421</td>
<td>Regional Organisation</td>
<td>N220 - Hexham Swamp Rehabilitation Project</td>
<td>$1,000,000</td>
<td></td>
<td>$665,477</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lake Macquarie and Tuggerah Lake Turtle Watch Committee</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>Community</td>
<td>Lake Macquarie and Tuggerah Lake Marine Turtle Monitoring</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>$18,228</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lake Macquarie City Council</td>
<td>PO Box 1906 HUNTER REGION MAIL CENTRE NSW 2284</td>
<td>Local Government</td>
<td>Improving Stormwater Management in Warners Bay and Balmoral/Buttaba</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>$231,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name of Organisation</td>
<td>Address of Organisation</td>
<td>Type of Organisation - community organisation or business or individual</td>
<td>Program Title</td>
<td>Funding Amount - 1999</td>
<td>Funding Amount - 2000</td>
<td>Funding Amount - 2001</td>
<td>Funding Amount - 2002</td>
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<tr>
<td>----------------------</td>
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<td>--------------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
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<td>---------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lake Macquarie City Council</td>
<td>PO Box 1906 HUNTER REGION MAIL CENTRE NSW 2284</td>
<td>Local Government</td>
<td>Marine Sewage Reception Facilities for Lake Macquarie</td>
<td>$103,500</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Hunter &amp; Central Regional Environmental Management Strategy</td>
<td></td>
<td>Regional Organisation</td>
<td>LHCCREMS - Sustainable Stormwater Management Program</td>
<td>$58,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>National Parks and Wildlife Service</td>
<td>PO BOX 91 ALSTONVILLE NSW 2477</td>
<td>State Agency</td>
<td>Eucalyptus ben-thamii, Eucalyptus sp.55 and E. copulans Survey</td>
<td>$18,500</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Parks and Wildlife Service</td>
<td>PO BOX 91 ALSTONVILLE NSW 2477</td>
<td>State Agency</td>
<td>Pterostylis gibbosa Recovery Plan</td>
<td>$14,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Parks and Wildlife Service</td>
<td>PO BOX 91 ALSTONVILLE NSW 2477</td>
<td>State Agency</td>
<td>Awaba Bay Wetland Project</td>
<td>$14,594 $6,200 $6,200</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSW National Parks &amp; Wildlife Service</td>
<td>PO Box 361 GRAFTON NSW 2460</td>
<td>State Agency</td>
<td>Allocasuarina portuensis Recovery Plan</td>
<td>$11,000 $8,300</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSW National Parks &amp; Wildlife Service</td>
<td>PO Box 1967 HURSTVILLE NSW 2220</td>
<td>State Agency</td>
<td>Prostanthera junonis P sp Somersby or P sp 8 Recovery Plan</td>
<td>$15,500</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scrub a Tub Pty Ltd</td>
<td>13 Brays Road, CONCORD NSW 2137</td>
<td>Business/Industry</td>
<td>Sydney Mobile Sullage and Waste Oil Collection</td>
<td>$3,600</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shortland Wetlands Centre</td>
<td>PO Box 292 WALLSEND NSW 2287</td>
<td>Community</td>
<td>Grants to Voluntary Environment &amp; Heritage Organisations</td>
<td>$13,000 $12,350 $12,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Organisation</th>
<th>Address of Organisation</th>
<th>Type of Organisation - community organisation or business or individual</th>
<th>Program Title</th>
<th>Funding Amount - 1999</th>
<th>Funding Amount - 2000</th>
<th>Funding Amount - 2001</th>
<th>Funding Amount - 2002</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sydney Regional Organisations and Illawarra Catchment Management Committee</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>Regional Organisation</td>
<td>Greenhouse Parks Program Sydney and Illawarra</td>
<td>$54,400</td>
<td>$66,720</td>
<td>$73,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Newcastle</td>
<td>Department of Leisure &amp; Tourism Studies NEWCASTLE NSW 2308 PO Box 3720 PARRA-MATTA NSW 2124</td>
<td>Tertiary Institution</td>
<td>Monitoring of Central Coast Rocky Reefs</td>
<td>$27,670</td>
<td>$28,180</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper Parramatta River Catchment Trust</td>
<td>PO Box 3720 PARRAMATTA NSW 2124</td>
<td>Regional Organisation</td>
<td>Community monitoring of Pollution Sources for Lake Parramatta</td>
<td>$4,700</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper Parramatta River Catchment Trust</td>
<td>PO Box 3720 PARRAMATTA NSW 2124</td>
<td>Regional Organisation</td>
<td>Biodiversity study of the Upper Parramatta River catchment</td>
<td>$14,400</td>
<td>$14,400</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wyong Shire Council</td>
<td>PO Box 20 WYONG NSW 2259</td>
<td>Local Government</td>
<td>Monitoring Storm-water for Pollutants in Tuggerah Lakes Catchment</td>
<td>$58,800</td>
<td>$58,800</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wyong Shire Council</td>
<td>PO Box 20 WYONG NSW 2259</td>
<td>Local Government</td>
<td>Ecologically Sustainable Management of Estuarine Foreshores and Saltmarsh</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>$30,100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Where the address is blank, the details are not on record.

In the above table, the addresses of some organisations are located outside of the Electorate of Charlton. Funding to these projects was allocated to Charlton as well as a number of other electorates.

Natural Heritage Trust data is recorded on a financial year basis and by calendar years. For example, amounts listed under 1999 is funding for 1998/1999 financial year.

Centenary of Federation: Programs

(Question No. 1723)

Mr Martin Ferguson asked Minister representing the Minister for the Arts and Sport, upon notice, on 24 March 2003:
Further to the answer to question No. 1111 (Hansard, 18 March 2003, page 12622) concerning the Centenary of Federation, was travelling allowance payable to members of the National Council for the Centenary of Federation in addition to their daily sitting fees; if so, what was the amount of travelling allowance payable and was this allowance payable irrespective of whether they stayed in commercial accommodation.

Mr McGauran—The Minister for the Arts and Sport has provided the following answer to the honourable member’s question:

Travelling allowance was payable to members of the National Council for the Centenary of Federation in addition to their daily sitting fees. The Remuneration Tribunal made regular determinations regarding the travelling allowance and sitting fees payable.

The final 2001 rates were:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Rates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sydney</td>
<td>$350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melbourne, Brisbane,</td>
<td>$360</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perth</td>
<td>$300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adelaide, Darwin, Hobart</td>
<td>$290</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canberra</td>
<td>$240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other than Capital City</td>
<td>$190</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Under the Remuneration Tribunal’s Determination 2000/06 (26 July 2000) Part 2 – Rates of Travelling Allowance, is the following:

2.1.(c) “Where an office holder is accommodated in private, non-commercial accommodation, such as the home of a family member or friend, a rate of one-third of the specified rate is payable, rounded upwards to the nearest dollar…”

Child Support Agency: Clients
(Question No. 1748)

Ms Vamvakinou asked the Minister representing the Minister for Family and Community Services, upon notice, on 24 March 2003:

(1) On most recent data, how many Child Support Agency clients reside in (a) Victoria and (b) in 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.

(2) On the most recent data, how many youth allowance recipients reside in (a) Victoria and (b) in 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 Anthony—The Minister for Family and Community Services has provided the following answer to the honourable member’s question:

(1) (a)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>No. of Child Support Clients</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td>289 810</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(1) (b)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Postcode</th>
<th>No. of payers</th>
<th>No. of payees</th>
<th>Total No. of clients</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3036</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>207</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3037</td>
<td>482</td>
<td>666</td>
<td>1 148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3038</td>
<td>519</td>
<td>658</td>
<td>1 177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3043</td>
<td>509</td>
<td>517</td>
<td>1 026</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3046</td>
<td>1 010</td>
<td>941</td>
<td>1 951</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3047</td>
<td>1 028</td>
<td>1 015</td>
<td>2 043</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3048</td>
<td>835</td>
<td>935</td>
<td>1 770</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3049</td>
<td>257</td>
<td>935</td>
<td>1 192</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

**Social Welfare: Parenting Payments**  
(Question No. 1752)

Ms Vamvakinou asked the Minister representing the Minister for Family and Community Services, upon notice, on 24 March 2003:

On the most recent data, how many parenting payment single recipients reside in (a) Victoria and (b) in 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 Anthony — The Minister for Family and Community Services has provided the following answer to the honourable member’s question:

(a) 95 531.

(b) 3036 3037 3038 3043 3046 3047 3048 3049 3059 3060 3061 3064 3427 3428 62 694 398 391 707 838 777 234 59 278 118 791 64

Data current as at 7 March 2003.

NOTE: Figures represented with <20 are not provided to protect the privacy of these customers.

**Family and Community Services: Men and Family Relationships Program**  
(Question No. 1754)

Mrs Irwin asked the Minister representing the Minister for Family and Community Services, upon notice, on 25 March 2003:

(1) Has the Minister received an evaluation of the Men and Family Relationships initiative prepared by consultants Phoenix Projects; if so, when will the Minister release the findings of the evaluation.

(2) Will the Minister release the findings of the evaluation before the 2003-2004 Budget is announced.

Mr Anthony — The Minister for Family and Community Services has provided the following answer to the honourable member’s question:

Data current as at 7 March 2003.

### HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

**Postcode No. of payers No. of payees Total No. of clients**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Postcode</th>
<th>No. of payers</th>
<th>No. of payees</th>
<th>Total No. of clients</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3059</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3060</td>
<td>373</td>
<td>348</td>
<td>721</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3061</td>
<td>357</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>509</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3064</td>
<td>778</td>
<td>1 013</td>
<td>1 791</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3427</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>216</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3428</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Note that the Overseas and Tasmanian clients normally included in the Victorian - Tasmanian Region has been excluded from these tables.

(2) (a) 93 343.

(b) 3036 3037 3038 3043 3046 3047 3048 3049 3059 3060 3061 3064 3427 3428 58 547 551 355 653 802 768 181 142 299 247 556 41 <20

Data current as at 21 February 2003.
(1) Yes the Minister has received the Final Report from the evaluation of the Men and Family Relationships program. The Final Report was released on 6 May 2003 and is available on the Department of Family and Community Services website.

(2) The Final Report was released prior to the announcement of the 2003-2004 Budget.

Commonwealth Appointments: Nominees
(Question No. 1766)

Mr Murphy asked the Attorney-General, upon notice, on 26 March 2003:

(1) Before appointing magistrates and judges to the bench, does he take steps to ensure that the nominees do not have a history of tax avoidance or any outstanding obligations under Australia’s tax laws that would bring into question their suitability to be appointed; if so, what are those steps; if not, why not.

(2) Before appointing Royal Commissioners and members of Commonwealth Tribunals, does he take steps to ensure that the nominees do not have a history of tax avoidance or any outstanding obligations under Australia’s tax laws that would bring into question their suitability to be appointed; if so, what are those steps; if not, why not.

Mr Williams—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) Before the name of a nominee for appointment as a federal magistrate or judge is submitted to Cabinet, the nominee is asked to provide assurances that he or she does not have any private interests, including taxation arrangements, which might give rise to a conflict of interest with his or her public duties, or which would otherwise cause embarrassment to the Government or to the nominee. In addition, a search is conducted of the Insolvency and Trustee Service Australia’s National Personal Insolvency Index, which contains information on proceedings and administrations under the Bankruptcy Act 1966.

(2) My Ministerial responsibilities do not include that of nominating Royal Commissioners. I am advised that, consistent with the practice of previous Governments, this Government has not sought assurances from nominees for Royal Commissioner appointments in respect of private interests, including taxation arrangements, which might give rise to a conflict of interest with their public duties. Considerable care is taken to appoint a highly respected person who is eminently well qualified to undertake the inquiry. Frequently, this is a serving or retired judge. Holders of judicial office nominated for appointment to Commonwealth tribunals in my portfolio are also not asked to provide assurances. For nominees for appointment to such tribunals within my portfolio responsibilities who do not hold judicial office, the procedure outlined in (1) above applies.

Human Rights: Iraq
(Question No. 1801)

Ms Jann McFarlane asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs, upon notice, on 13 May 2003:

After the current conflict in Iraq is over, what steps is the Government going to take to: (a) make an unambiguous commitment to the peace, (b) develop a foreign policy for our country, which gives priority to human rights in the context of our national interests, and (c) commit to a renewed effort to develop international legal rules, which are underpinned by an irreducible commitment to the protection of human rights.

Mr Downer—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(a) The Government is committed to peace and recognises that a just and durable peace is the common desire of all people.

(b) The Government has consistently viewed human rights as an inseparable part of Australia’s foreign policy approach, and will continue to do so.
(c) The Government is fully committed to encouraging universal adherence to existing international human rights covenants and conventions.

**Frequent Flyer Points**

*(Question No. 1807)*

**Mr Martin Ferguson** asked the Minister representing the Special Minister of State, upon notice, on 13 May 2003:

1. In respect of the agreement with Qantas to drop frequent flier arrangements for Members of Parliament in return for cheaper airfares as reported in the Sydney Morning Herald on 8 February 2002, have the details of this agreement been announced; if so, where; if not, why not.

2. If the agreement is not finalised, when will it be completed and what is the cause of the delay; if the agreement is not intended to be finalised, why not and who made that decision.

3. Will the agreement save taxpayers $1 million as reported; if not, what are the projected savings and how were they calculated.

4. When will the agreement come into effect.

5. Will the agreement also apply to staff travel; if so, what is the expected saving attributable to discounts from Qantas for staff travel.

6. Who has been undertaking the negotiations on behalf of the Government and how many meetings have occurred.

7. Have meetings been held with any airline(s) other than Qantas to discuss Government discounts or special arrangements; if so, which airlines and what is the detail of any agreed arrangements; if not, why not.

**Mr Abbott**—The Special Minister of State has provided the following answer to the honourable member’s question:

1. There has been no agreement made with Qantas to relinquish Frequent Flyer points in return for cheaper airfares for Parliamentary travellers. Qantas has recently implemented a policy of not switching off Frequent Flyer points when new agreements are negotiated. Qantas has made an undertaking that should the policy change, it will be prepared to extend that facility to Parliamentary travellers.

2. An agreement has been finalised with Qantas regarding discounted airfares.

3. As a result of this agreement significant savings will be realised by the Commonwealth. The agreement has been made with the undertaking to Qantas that the details will remain confidential.

4. 1 July 2003.

5. Yes. The savings are expected to be substantial.

6. Officers of the Department of Finance and Administration. Two meetings have occurred in addition to letters, telephone conversations and e-mails.

7. The Department has written to Singapore Airlines, American Airlines, British Airways, Regional Express and Virgin asking for proposals outlining the concessions that they would be prepared to offer for Parliamentary travel.

   No formal agreements have been reached with these airlines at this point. However, the Department has met with Singapore Airlines and been advised that Parliamentary travellers currently obtain the highest level of corporate discount offered by that airline.

   British Airways and American Airlines have not yet responded with an offer. The Department recently approached Regional Express and Virgin Blue and it is awaiting their response.
Citizenship Ceremonies: Representation
(Question No. 1816)

Mr Laurie Ferguson asked the Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs, upon notice, on 13 May 2003:

(1) On how many occasions since November 2001 has the Minister appointed someone other than the local Federal Member of Parliament, a Senator representing the State/Territory concerned or a senior officer of his Department to act as the Minister’s representative at a ceremony at which Australian citizenship was conferred.

(2) In respect of each occasion, what was: (a) the date and venue of the ceremony, and (b) the name and status of the person appointed.

Mr Hardgrave—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) and (2) There is no consolidated record of who attended as my representative at the citizenship ceremonies held since November 2001 and it would be an exhaustive task to assemble this information from paper records. The practice of successive governments has been not to authorise the expenditure of time and money involved in assembling such information on a general basis.

Citizenship Ceremonies: Australian Citizenship Pledge
(Question No. 1817)

Mr Laurie Ferguson asked the Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs, upon notice, on 13 May 2003:

(1) Since November 2001, how many persons not holding the position of Mayor of the local Council has the Minister appointed to be the presiding officer at a ceremony at which Australian citizenship was conferred.

(2) In respect of each occasion, what was: (a) the name and status of the person, (b) the number of ceremonies the person has presided over, (c) the venue of each citizenship ceremony, (d) the federal electorate and local government area in which the ceremony was held, and (e) the number of people on whom citizenship was conferred.

Mr Hardgrave—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) Since 1 November 2001, I have approved under the Australian Citizenship Act 1948 a number of persons and classes of persons to administer the Australian Citizenship Pledge and so confer Australian citizenship. I approved an update to the long-standing network of presiding officers drawn largely from the Commonwealth, Territories and Local Government, which includes mayors, lord mayors, presidents, chairmen and administrators in local government. In addition, from 1 November 2001 to 26 June 2003, I have given separate one-off approvals for 20 persons to act as presiding officers. One-off approvals allow the person to confer citizenship on a specific day only.

(2) The network of presiding officers performs the vast majority of the 70,000 to 80,000 citizenship conferrals each year. In relation to conferrals administered by persons in this network other than mayors, the information sought is contained on paper files in Central, State and Territory offices of the Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs (DIMIA) and it would be a major task to collect and assemble it. The practice of successive governments has been not to authorise the expenditure of time and money involved in assembling such information on a general basis.

In relation to the 20 presiding officers given one-off approval to confer citizenship, 28 different ceremonies were involved. The names, positions in the community of the 20 presiding officers and the electorates or, for Senators, the State in which the ceremonies were performed, are set out be-
low. The venues, local government areas and number of conferees at individual ceremonies are not recorded in DIMIA’s electronic records contained in the Integrated Client Service Environment and are not otherwise readily available. I am not prepared to authorise the expenditure of resources to extract this information from other records.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(a) Name and Status</th>
<th>(b) Number of ceremonies person has presided over</th>
<th>(d) Federal Electorate for MP State for Senator</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ms Joanna Gash MP,</td>
<td>Two</td>
<td>Gilmore (each occasion)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Member for Gilmore</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr John Ellerink MLA, Northern Territory</td>
<td>Two</td>
<td>Lingiari (each occasion)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr Bob Baldwin MP,</td>
<td>One</td>
<td>Paterson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Member for Paterson</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Hon Peter Beattie MLA, Premier of Queensland</td>
<td>Two</td>
<td>Brisbane</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr Michael Johnson MP, Member for Ryan</td>
<td>Three</td>
<td>Ryan (each occasion)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr Peter King MP, Member for Wentworth</td>
<td>Two</td>
<td>Sydney (each occasion)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr Bruce Billson MP, Member for Dunkley</td>
<td>One</td>
<td>Dickson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr Peter Dutton MP, Member for Dickson</td>
<td>One</td>
<td>Blair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr Cameron Thomson MP, Member for Blair</td>
<td>One</td>
<td>Bendigo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr Kevin Gibbins Councillor</td>
<td>One</td>
<td>Eden Monaro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City of Greater Bendigo</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr Andrew Metcalfe (then) Acting Secretary, Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet</td>
<td>One</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr Steven Ciobo MP, Member for Moncrieff</td>
<td>One</td>
<td>Moncrieff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr Don Randall MP, Member for Canning</td>
<td>One</td>
<td>Perth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Hon David Jull MP, Member for Fadden</td>
<td>One</td>
<td>Fadden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Hon Con Sciaccia MP, Member for Bowman</td>
<td>One</td>
<td>Bowman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sen The Hon Ron Boswell, Senator for Queensland</td>
<td>Three</td>
<td>Queensland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms Teresa Gambharo MP, Member for Petrie</td>
<td>One</td>
<td>Petrie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Hon Ian McFarlane MP, Member for Groom</td>
<td>One</td>
<td>Groom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Hon Dr Brendan Nelson MP, Member for Bradfield</td>
<td>One</td>
<td>Sydney</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr Ken Ticehurst MP, Member for Dobell</td>
<td>One</td>
<td>Dobell</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Immigration: Humanitarian and Refugee Entrants
(Question No. 1818)

Mr Laurie Ferguson asked the Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs, upon notice, on 13 May 2002:

(1) In each State and Territory, which organisations currently hold contracts under the Accommodation Support element of the Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Strategy for: (a) finding, providing and maintaining short-term on arrival accommodation, and (b) finding longer-term rental accommodation and what are the commencement and conclusion dates for each contract.

(2) Did the Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs (DIMIA) hold industry briefings in Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane in August 2002 for organisations interested in tendering for future Accommodation Support contracts for NSW, Victoria (Melbourne) and Queensland (Brisbane).

(3) Have formal Requests for Tenders since been issued for each location; if not, what is the reason for the delay and the expected timetable for doing so.

(4) Has the Brisbane tender now been finalised; if so, who were the successful tenderer(s); if not, what is the expected timetable for doing so.

(5) Did the Request for Tender for the Brisbane contract, at paragraph 3.7.2, that the Central Referral Unit in DIMIA will endeavour to provide service providers with 2-4 weeks notice of impending client arrivals but may at times provide as little as 24 hours notice; if so, what system failures within DIMIA would lead to such inadequate notice being given.

(6) How long after arrival are humanitarian and refugee entrants expected to move to longer-term rental accommodation and what financial challenges usually face them in doing so.

(7) Has the Department taken any specific measures under the program to help lessen the financial challenges facing humanitarian and refugee entrants; if so, what are the details; if not, does it leave it to charitable organisations and State Government agencies to take responsibility for doing so.

Mr Hardgrave—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) The answer to the questions is presented in the tables below:

(a) Organisations that currently hold contracts to provide and maintain short term on arrival accommodation by State and Territory

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State/Territory</th>
<th>Region Covered</th>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Commencement Date</th>
<th>Conclusion Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACT</td>
<td>Canberra</td>
<td>Centacare</td>
<td>4 May 2001</td>
<td>4 May 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>Sydney</td>
<td>Resolve FM</td>
<td>1 March 1995</td>
<td>31 December 2003*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Coffs Harbour &amp;</td>
<td>Anglicare Migrant Services</td>
<td>10 April 2002</td>
<td>31 December 2003*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wollongong</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Newcastle</td>
<td>New South Wales Migrant Resource Centre Association Inverted</td>
<td>6 February 2002</td>
<td>31 December 2003*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wagga Wagga</td>
<td>Ethnic Communities Council of Wagga Wagga Incorporated</td>
<td>4 September 2001</td>
<td>3 September 2003*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NT</td>
<td>Darwin</td>
<td>Melaleuca Refugee Centre Torture and Trauma Survivors Service of the NT</td>
<td>29 January 2002</td>
<td>28 January 2005</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State/Territory</th>
<th>Region Covered</th>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Commencement Date</th>
<th>Conclusion Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>QLD</td>
<td>Brisbane</td>
<td>Resolve FM</td>
<td>11 March 2003</td>
<td>10 March 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Logan, Beenleigh &amp; Gold Coast</td>
<td>Access Incorporated</td>
<td>5 February 2001</td>
<td>30 June 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Townsville</td>
<td>Townsville Multicultural Support Group</td>
<td>25 June 2001</td>
<td>30 June 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Toowoomba</td>
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<td>13 November 2001</td>
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<td>4 July 2001</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Adelaide</td>
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<td>VIC</td>
<td>Melbourne</td>
<td>Resolve FM</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Geelong</td>
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<td>WA</td>
<td>Perth</td>
<td>Resolve FM</td>
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<td>11 November 2003*</td>
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<td>8 January 2001</td>
<td>30 June 2004</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

* Extensions are being offered to 30 June 2004.

(b) Organisations that currently hold contracts to find long term accommodation by State and Territory

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State/Territory</th>
<th>Region Covered</th>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Commencement Date</th>
<th>Conclusion Date</th>
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<td>ACT</td>
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<td>Sydney, Coffs Harbour &amp; Wollongong</td>
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<td>29 January 2002</td>
<td>28 January 2005</td>
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<td>QLD</td>
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<td>Resolve FM</td>
<td>11 March 2003</td>
<td>10 March 2006</td>
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<td>Logan, Beenleigh &amp; Gold Coast</td>
<td>Access Incorporated</td>
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(2) Yes, briefings were held in August and September 2002 in Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane for organisations interested in tendering for future Accommodation Support contracts.

(3) A formal Request for Tender for Brisbane was released on 2 November 2002. In relation to Sydney and Melbourne there was limited interest from potential tenderers in these cities. As a result, it was decided to delay the retendering in these two areas until the Evaluation of the Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Strategy (IHSS) was completed. The next IHSS tender is expected to be released in the first half of 2004.

(4) Yes, the Brisbane tender has now been finalised. The successful tenderer was Resolve FM Pty Ltd.

(5) Yes, the Request for Tender for the Brisbane area did indicate at paragraph 3.7.2 that while there will generally be notice of around 2-4 weeks of an impending arrival or arrivals, there are times when as little as 24 hours notice is provided.

Generally, the short notice is caused by visa subclass 203 (Emergency Rescue) entrants who have had to be evacuated at short notice due to circumstances that would place them at risk if they were to stay in their country of residence.

(6) Humanitarian entrants are expected to move to longer term rental accommodation when appropriate accommodation that suits the family’s needs is found. This generally occurs at around 6 weeks after arrival.

**QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**
The major financial challenge faced by entrants is having sufficient financial resources to pay for bond, connection of utilities and rent in advance. This is generally more of an issue for singles and couples who have limited access to other sources of income eg Family Benefits.

(7) Yes, the Department has taken steps to address the financial barrier faced by some entrants. In States/Territories where bond and utilities assistance is not available from the State government, contractors have included the provision of bond and utilities assistance in their unit price. In recognition that the financial challenge is hardest on singles despite bond and utilities assistance being available from the State government, a single supplement has also been made available by contractors in some States to assist singles to move into long term accommodation.

Additional funding has also been made available in the 2003-04 budget to further enhance support provided through the Accommodation Support element of the IHSS.

Australian Electoral Commission: Restructure
(Question No. 1819)

Ms Hall asked the Minister representing the Special Minister of State, upon notice, on 13 May 2003:

(1) If there is to be a restructure to the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC): (a) what is the rationale for the restructure, and (b) how will it impact on elections and new enrolments.

(2) Are there any proposals to out-source the enrolment of new electors or any other functions of the AEC.

(3) Would a restructure have any legal implications.

Mr Abbott—The Special Minister of State has provided the following answer to the honourable member’s question:

As provided by the AEC

(1) The AEC is not planning a restructure.

(2) The AEC is outsourcing the scanning process that produces a consolidated record of electors who voted from certified lists marked at polling places. Certified lists scanning is only undertaken at an election by ongoing and temporary staff in State Head Offices and this move will have no impact on the AEC’s permanent staffing profile or structure. This outsourcing has been prompted by the age of the current scanning equipment, which was purchased for use at the 1987 Federal election, and because the technology it employs is approaching obsolescence. Replacement costs are over $1 million. Outsourcing the scanning operation will provide the AEC with a cheaper solution and access to state of the art technology.

There are no proposals to outsource the enrolment of new electors. The AEC is currently examining how new technologies might be able to assist in enrolment processing. One initiative in this area is the pilot development of a process that uses scanning and optical character recognition (OCR) to automatically capture information on enrolment applications (and possibly other client correspondence). This pilot is currently underway, after which an evaluation will be made of its viability for use in the AEC.

If assessed positively, all possible options would be canvassed on how best to use the OCR technology. Outsourcing functions would, of course, be considered among these options. The AEC would also need to examine any legal impact of provisions of Commonwealth Electoral Act in any changes made.

(3) As stated in the answer to question (1), there is no restructure planned for the AEC. Any changes to business processes or business delivery the AEC might undertake in the future would, of course,
take account of the requirements for the successful delivery of an election and compliance with our legislative framework.

Workplace Relations: Building and Construction Industry
(Question No. 1822)

Mr McClelland asked the Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations, upon notices 13 May 2003:

For each State and Territory over the last five calendar years, what was the number of: (a) orders issued against the Construction and General Division of the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union under s.127 of the Workplace Relations Act 1996 (as an alternative, if the issuance of orders against the Construction and General Division of the CFMEU cannot be ascertained, the number of orders issued against the CFMEU for activities in the building and construction industry), (b) applications to the Federal Court of Australia for enforcement (penalties and/or injunctive relief) pertaining to such orders, and (c) penalties and injunctions issued by the Federal Court of Australia pertaining to such orders and the nature of each of these penalties and injunctions.

Mr Abbott—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(a) Advice from the Australian Industrial Registry (AIR) is that orders issued against the Construction and General Division of the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union under s.127 of the Workplace Relations Act 1996 (the WR Act) cannot be ascertained.

In answer to the alternative, advice from the AIR is that the following number of s. 127 orders under the WR Act have been issued against the CFMEU for activities in the building and construction industry in the last five years.

- In 2003, there were four orders issued, two from Queensland, one in Victoria and one in Western Australia.
- In 2002, there were three orders issued, two in Victoria and one in South Australia.
- In 2001, there were three orders issued, one in Victoria, one in South Australia and one in New South Wales.
- In 2000, there was one order issued in Western Australia.
- In 1999, there were four orders issued, two in Victoria, one in New South Wales and one in Western Australia.

(b) and (c) the Attorney General’s Department has advised that the Federal Court does not retain electronic records of numbers of applications for enforcement of orders issued against particular unions and the content of the orders made by the Court.

Trade: Free Trade Agreement with United States
(Question No. 1824)

Mr McClelland asked the Minister for Trade, upon notice, on 13 May 2003:

(1) As part of the process of establishing a free trade agreement between Australia and the United States of America, will there be any Commonwealth structural adjustment programs established (or already in place) to assist firms and their employees that will be disadvantaged or otherwise affected by such a free trade agreement.

(2) Do such programs already exist; if so, what are the details ie. name, budget, staffing, in which department they are located, the measures used to assist affected firms and their employees, parties consulted (businesses, employees, trade unions, industry associations).

(3) If such programs do not already exist, will the Commonwealth establish such programs.
(4) If there are plans to establish such programs, what are the details.

(5) Is the Commonwealth aware of such programs in the US.

(6) Have there been discussions about such programs with the US negotiators.

Mr Vaile—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) The need for any structural assistance measures will be fully assessed by the Government as the outcome of the agreement becomes clear. Structural adjustment considerations are a key part of the Government’s economic and employment policies. In addition, industry consultations are an important element of the Government’s approach to trade negotiations and the implications for Australian industry of any new commitments will be fully taken into account in the Government’s approach to the negotiations and in considering a final agreement and appropriate measures that may be required to implement it.

(2) The Government already has a number of sector specific programs to assist with structural adjustment related to tariff reductions and associated changes to international market competitiveness. The Automotive Competitiveness and Investment Scheme (ACIS) provides transitional assistance to encourage competitive investment and innovation in the Australian automotive industry in order to achieve sustainable growth in the context of trade liberalisation. Automotive tariffs are scheduled to be reduced from 15 per cent to 10 per cent on 1 January 2005. In December 2002, as a result of the Productivity Commission Review, the Government announced that automotive tariffs would be reduced from 10 per cent to 5 per cent on 1 January 2010. To prepare the automotive industry for this tariff reduction, ACIS will deliver an estimated $4.2 billion to the industry over the period 2006 to 2015. The Department of Industry, Tourism and Resources is responsible for administering this program.

Another program is the $700 million Post-2000 Assistance Package for the Textile Clothing and Footwear (TCF) industry, which is aimed at increasing the international competitiveness of Australia’s TCF industry. The TCF Strategic Investment Program is a five year scheme designed to promote an increase in investment by our TCF industries in capital plant or equipment, R&D including product development, and assistance for regional reconfiguration. There is $135 million available under the scheme in 2003/2004. The Department of Industry, Tourism and Resources is responsible for administering this program.

More broadly, the government addresses labour market disadvantage through funding Job Network, a national network of private and community organisations contracted by the Government to deliver employment services and get unemployed people into jobs. Job Network members provide four types of services: Job Matching, Job Search Training, Intensive Support and the New Enterprise Incentive Scheme (NEIS). The Government also funds a number of other general labour market and regional assistance programs which assist the unemployed and other disadvantaged people, including the Indigenous Employment Programme and the Regional Assistance Programme.

Some of these schemes may have relevance to industries that are affected by changes flowing from an FTA with the US. That would depend in large part on the relative impact of competition from imports or other changes on specific industries and the potential growth generated by expanded export opportunities in the US as a result of the agreement. I note that there are also other schemes in place for shipbuilding and agriculture, which seek to increase the international competitiveness of these industries. Any changes flowing from an FTA are not likely to create a need for additional adjustment assistance in those sectors given that existing levels of protection in Australia are low and there is potential for significant expansion of Australian exports in those sectors as a result of an FTA.

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
(3) The Government will consider whether there is a need for any further structural adjustment programs in addition to those listed in response to Questions 1 and 2, or for any additional funding for those programs, as the final outcome of the agreement becomes clear. We will continue to consult with industry groups during the negotiations and at their conclusion to assess the benefits and costs for specific industry sectors of the Agreement. This will assist in assessing whether there is a need for additional structural adjustment measures.

(4) There are no plans at this stage. This is a process of assessment (as outlined in answer to question 3).

(5) Like Australia, the US has structural adjustment programs in a broad sense, with a range of public policy initiatives to assist in retraining and re-employment for the unemployed and disadvantaged by structural changes in the economy. Under the Trade Adjustment Assistance Reform Act of 2002, the US also has programs that provide assistance to industries affected by trade-related structural adjustment.

(6) No

Environment: Toxic Waste
(Question No. 1827)

Dr Lawrence asked the Minister for the Environment and Heritage, upon notice, on 26 May 2003:

(1) Has the Government investigated claims made on the ABC Television program Four Corners in 2002 that the Government of the Solomon Islands has entered into an agreement with the Taiwanese Government in which the Solomon Islands is bound to accept and dispose of 500,000 tonnes of toxic waste from Taiwan.

(2) What is the likely environmental impact of this agreement on the Great Barrier Reef.

Dr Kemp—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) Yes, the Government has investigated claims made on the ABC Television program Four Corners on 20 May 2002 that: “10 days ago, the Solomon Islands also agreed to take 3 million tonnes of Taiwan’s toxic waste”. The Government found the following:

- On 23 May 2002, the Taiwan Environmental Protection Administration stated that it had never approved the export of any waste to the Solomon Islands. It also said that it would never issue a permit to export industrial waste to another country for dumping only, and not for treatment.

- The Administration is, however, monitoring the activities of a company reportedly planning to export industrial waste to the Solomons falsely described as garbage and humus.

- According to press reports in May 2002, seven members of the Solomon Islands Cabinet threatened to withdraw support for the government if the prime minister did not support moves to get an import licence issued. However, the Director of Quarantine refused to issue the license on the grounds that the Solomon Islands had ratified the Waigani Convention.

- The Waigani Convention bans the importation into Pacific island countries of hazardous wastes and radioactive wastes. The Solomon Islands ratified the Waigani Convention on 7 October 1998.

(2) Since Taiwan has stated that it will not issue an export permit and the Solomon Islands has not issued an import licence, there is no agreement and consequently no impact of the agreement on the Great Barrier Reef.
Pakistan: Detention of Australian Citizen  
(Question No. 1830)

Ms Roxon asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs, upon notice, on 13 May 2003:

(1) Has the Australian High Commissioner in Pakistan received any information from Pakistan as to the reasons for their continued detention in Islamabad of Mr Jack Thomas, an Australian citizen; if so, can he provide this information, or an indication of what is contained in this information.

(2) What charges, if any, might be laid against Mr Thomas by Pakistani authorities.

(3) Is it the case that the Australian Federal Police has questioned Mr Thomas while he is in detention in Pakistan without the presence of a lawyer; if so, are any charges contemplated as a result of this interrogation.

(4) Which other Australian agencies have had access to, or have questioned, Mr Thomas while he has been detained in Pakistan.

(5) Has there been any contact, or representation from, his office to any Ministerial office in Pakistan regarding Mr Thomas; if so, what is the nature of such contact or representations.

(6) How long is the Government willing to allow Pakistan to hold an Australian national without charge.

(7) Is Mr Thomas under investigation by Australian authorities; if so, for what.

Mr Downer—the answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) Mr Thomas was detained by Pakistani authorities under the Security of Pakistan Act. He was not charged and was deported to Australia on 4 June 2003, arriving on 5 June 2003.

(2) Pakistani authorities did not charge Mr Thomas. He has been deported to Australia.

(3) Questions about investigations into Mr Thomas’s activities should be addressed to the Attorney-General.

(4) Questions about investigations into Mr Thomas’s activities should be addressed to the Attorney-General.

(5) No. Representations were made on several occasions by the High Commissioner to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry for the Interior about the legal basis for Mr Thomas’s detention and on arrangements for his deportation.

(6) Around 500 Australians are arrested or detained overseas each year. The Government takes an active interest in each case and will make representations to ensure that Australians are treated in accordance with local law. We did this in the Thomas case.

(7) Questions about investigations into Mr Thomas’s activities should be addressed to the Attorney-General.

Iraq  
(Question No. 1831)

Mr Latham asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs, upon notice, on 13 May 2003:

(1) Has consideration been given to Australian accession to the Second Protocol (The Hague 1999) to the UNESCO Convention on the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict (The Hague 1954) since the end of hostilities in Iraq; if so, what was the decision.

(2) Have consultations been held with Australia’s allies, the United States of America and the United Kingdom, concerning their accession to the Second Protocol; if so, what was the outcome.
Mr Downer—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) No.
(2) No.

Governor-General: Legal Proceedings
(Question No. 1833)

Mr Tanner asked the Prime Minister, upon notice, on 13 May 2003:

(1) Has the Governor-General initiated any kind of legal proceedings or motions in any Australian court during 2003.
(2) Has the Governor-General initiated any applications for suppression orders with respect to any legal proceedings in any Australian court during 2003.

Mr Howard—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

In relation to the former Governor-General

(1) Not to my knowledge, other than in relation to the application referred to in part (2) of the honourable member’s question.
(2) Yes.

Tambling, Mr Grant: Appointment
(Question No. 1835)

Mr Kelvin Thomson asked the Minister for the Environment and Heritage, upon notice, on 26 May 2003:

With reference to the review of the Mandatory Renewable Energy Target Scheme:

(1) Can the Minister confirm the report in the Northern Territory News on 26 March 2003 which states that the former Senator for the Northern Territory, Mr Grant Tambling, has been awarded the position of Chair of a panel reviewing the Commonwealth’s renewable energy legislation; if so, (a) what is Mr Tambling’s salary, and (b) what monetary or other entitlements are provided to Mr Tambling in the position.

Dr Kemp—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) I confirm that the Hon. Grant Tambling has been appointed as Chair of a panel established to undertake a review of the Renewable Energy (Electricity) Act 2000, which I announced jointly with the Minister for Industry, Tourism and Resources, the Hon Ian Macfarlane on 25 March 2003.
   (a) Mr Tambling’s fee for services is $60,000 exclusive of GST, which is within the Remuneration Tribunal’s parameters.
   (b) Mr Tambling is paid under a Contract for Services with the Australian Greenhouse Office, and is paid travel allowance at the Remuneration Tribunal Tier 1 rate and reimbursed reasonable out of pocket expenses relating to review business.

Tourism: Tweed Heads to Sydney Promotional Bus Tour
(Question No. 1836)

Mr Martin Ferguson asked the Minister for Small Business and Tourism, upon notice, on 14 May 2003:

(1) In respect of his recent Tweed Heads to Sydney promotional bus tour, how many people were on the bus trip, who were they and on which days were they present.
(2) How much did the bus trip cost, what is the breakdown of the expenses and who paid for the trip.

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
(3) Which media organisations were represented on the bus trip, which journalists were present and did they meet some of the cost of the trip; if so, what proportion.

(4) Of the 19 towns visited on the trip, how many public meetings were organised to discuss small business and tourism related issues.

Mr Hockey—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) There were four (4) Departmental officers on the bus trip.

(2) I am advised that the cost of the bus was $7791. Other costs included the normal travel allowance paid to staff.

(3) There were no media organisations represented or journalists present on the bus trip.

(4) There were numerous meetings.

Arts: Music Classification
(Question No. 1850)

Mr Murphy asked the Attorney-General, upon notice, on 14 May 2003:

(1) Is he aware of a Compact Disk (CD) by the band Deicide titled ‘Once Upon The Cross’.

(2) Is he aware that this CD is freely available in record shops throughout Australia.

(3) Is he aware that the CD’s issuance licence is to Roadrunner Records™ and is this trade mark registered in Australia; if not, where is this trade mark registered.

(4) Is he aware that the tracks on that CD include the following song titles: Once Upon The Cross, Christ Denied, When Satan Rules The World, Kill The Christian, Trick Or Betrayed, They Are The Children Of The Underworld, Behind The Light Thou Shall Rise, To Be Dead, and Confessional Rape.

(5) Is he aware that the following words are included in the track known as Confessional Rape: “Exploit the flesh of Christian descent” and “Molesting innocent children you’re trusted with” and is he able to say whether words to this effect constitute an act of paedophilia or incitement to perform acts of paedophilia.

(6) Is he aware that the following words are included in the track known as Kill The Christian: “Kill the Christian” (repeated seven times in chant) and “Destroy their temples and churches with fire. Where in this world will you hide. Sentenced to death, the anointment of Christ” and is he able to say whether words to this effect constitute an act of violation against Christians, or an incitement towards hatred; if so, how; if not, why not.

(7) What classification, if any, does this CD currently hold and, if it is not classified, why not.

(8) What action is he taking to prevent the importation, distribution and dissemination, under Customs or other laws, of music and other media that is clearly an incitement of hatred against Christianity and other religions; if no action is being taken, why not.

Mr Williams—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) Before I was asked this question, I was unaware of the Deicide CD Once Upon a Cross and I had not received any complaints about it. However, as a result of this question, I have sought advice on the content and status of the CD.

(2) I understand that Once Upon a Cross is not currently manufactured or distributed in Australia. Advice from the Australian Music Retailers’ Association (AMRA) indicates that the 1995 CD is very unlikely to be widely available in retail outlets in Australia. I have asked that the matter be referred to the Australian Record Industry Association (ARIA) and AMRA to reconsider the classification of the CD under the current Recorded Music Labelling Code of Practice (ARIA/AMRA Code) and to prohibit its sale to minors.
(3) Intellectual Property Australia has confirmed that Roadrunner Records is registered as a trademark in Australia.

(4) I have been advised of the titles of songs on the Deicide CD Once Upon a Cross.

(5) I have been advised of the nature of the lyrics in the song “Confessional Rape”. The Government is very concerned about lyrics concerning the sexual abuse of children. However, it is important that the lyrics are quoted in the context of the entire song, which, I am advised, could be interpreted as a condemnation of paedophilia. I have asked that the matter be referred to ARIA and AMRA to consider the specific issue of whether the lyrics of “Confessional Rape” could be interpreted as an incitement to paedophilia when reconsidering the CD’s classification under their Code. Incitement to paedophilia offences are covered by State and Territory criminal legislation and I am unable to comment on whether the lyrics would constitute such an offence.

(6) I have been advised of the nature of lyrics in the song “Kill the Christian”. The Government is concerned at suggestions that the song may be inciting vilification, hatred, or acts of violence towards others. I have asked that the matter be referred to ARIA and AMRA to consider these specific issues when reconsidering the CD’s classification under their Code. Religious vilification is not an offence under Commonwealth legislation.

(7) I am advised that the recording does not contain any visual component and hence, does not fall within the scope of the national classification scheme. Only audio recordings which contain a visual component require classification under the national classification scheme. Such recordings are classified as ‘films’ in accordance with the criteria in the National Classification Code and the Guidelines for the Classification of Films and Computer Games. Audio recordings which do not also contain a visual element fall within the scope of the ARIA/AMRA Code, which is administered by ARIA and AMRA.

I am also advised that ARIA labelled the product ‘Tier 2’ under a previous version of the ARIA/AMRA Code. This label advises consumers that the recording contains explicit language and is not recommended for persons under the age of 18.

(8) Under the national classification scheme, films (including videos, DVDs etc), computer games and certain publications, whether imported from overseas or produced locally, must be classified before they are sold, hired, or exhibited publicly in Australia.

In accordance with criteria in the National Classification Code, material which is found to “promote, incite or instruct in matters of crime or violence” will be classified RC (Refused Classification).

State and Territory classification enforcement legislation contains offence and penalty provisions relating to the distribution of unclassified and RC material.

Material that would be refused classification under the Code is treated as a prohibited import under the Customs (Prohibited Imports) Regulations 1956.

Commonwealth Revenue Fraud
(Question No. 1851)

Mr Murphy asked the Attorney-General, upon notice, on 14 May 2003:

(1) Is he aware of the following Criminal Proceedings and criminal convictions against Mr William John Walters (a.k.a. ‘Bill the Brickie’): (a) Regina v William John Walters [2001] NSWSC 640, and (b) Regina v William John Walters [2001] NSWSC 786.

(2) Is he aware that Mr Walters was convicted of a breach of section 29D of the Crimes Act 1914 (Cth), for defrauding the Commonwealth Revenue.
QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

(3) What was the total number of charges laid by the Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) in the years 2001, 2002 and 2003 under section 29D.

(4) How many of those charges under section 29D did the DPP not proceed with under the DPP’s discretionary powers.

(5) Is he aware of the rationale of Mr Justice Sully at paragraph 11 of the judgment in R v Walters [2001] NSWSC 640 that “Rather has he been prosecuted to conviction, and is now to be sentenced, because he financed that affluent lifestyle in a way that entailed such a use of the funds available to him as intentionally deprived the Commissioner of Taxation of the benefit of amounts of group tax deductions to which the Commissioner was lawfully entitled, and for which the prisoner persistently failed to account as by law required”.

Mr Williams—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) Yes.

(2) Yes.

(3) Charges are laid by investigating officers who are not employed by the DPP. According to the DPP’s records, 705 charges against section 29D of the Crimes Act 1914 were laid in 2001, 716 charges in 2002, and as at 4 June 2003, 143 charges in 2003.

(4) As at 4 June 2003, according to the DPP’s records of the charges in (3), 79 charges were discontinued in accordance with the Prosecution Policy of the Commonwealth.

(5) I am aware Justice Sully stated at paragraphs 9-11 of his judgement:

“[9] Fourth, and finally, there is something which would not usually be taken up in remarks on sentence, but which I feel strongly ought to be, as a matter of common fairness and decency to the prisoner, the subject of comment by the court.

[10] A central feature of the evidence at trial, and also of the competing Crown and defence cases as finally put to the jury, was the affluent lifestyle which the prisoner maintained for some years. That lifestyle was described, dissected and discussed in fine detail. What has thus emerged has been, already, the subject of a good deal of media comment. Much of what I have seen of that comment has struck me as being apt to expose the prisoner to a degree of public mockery that is in my opinion unseemly, unjust, unfeeling and unnecessary.

[11] It is, I think, timely to make it clear that the prisoner was not prosecuted, has not been convicted, and is not now to be sentenced, because he aspired to a lifestyle that was more affluent than that enjoyed by many other people; or because he managed to maintain for some time a lifestyle of conspicuous affluence. Rather has he been prosecuted to conviction, and is now to be sentenced, because he financed that affluent lifestyle in a way that entailed such a use of funds available to him as intentionally deprived the Commissioner of Taxation of the benefit of amounts of group tax deductions to which the Commissioner was lawfully entitled, and for which the prisoner persistently failed to account as by law required.”

Family Court: Brisbane
(Question No. 1860)

Mr Bevis asked the Attorney-General, upon notice, on 14 May 2003:

(1) How many matters are now waiting in the Brisbane Family Court for a judge to become available to hear them?

(2) Do any vacancies exist at the Family Court in Brisbane for judges; if so, how many and when will they be filled?

(3) Are there any plans to appoint another magistrate to the Federal Magistrate Service in Brisbane; if so, when is the appointment to be made; if not, why not?
(4) Is it intended to continue funding for two SES2 Registrars in Brisbane when one of the contracts expires in June 2003; if not, why not?

Mr Williams—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) The Family Court has advised me that there were a total of 757 matters awaiting a hearing by a judge in Brisbane as at 11 June 2003. Of these, 100 matters had been allocated a trial date and a further 41 had been set down for pre-trial conference. The balance of cases (616 matters) had not yet been set down for trial pending availability of judges to hear these matters.

(2) No. The Hon Justice Travis Lindenmayer, who retired on 31 December 2002, has been replaced by the Hon Justice Tim Carmody, who will take up his appointment on 7 July 2003.

(3) On 22 May 2003 I was pleased to announce that four new federal magistrates are to be appointed, including one in south-east Queensland. Advertisements for these positions appeared in the press on 23-24 May 2003.

(4) The final decision whether to continue funding for two SES2 Registrar positions in Brisbane is a matter for the Family Court to determine having regard to its priorities for resource allocation around Australia.

The Family Court has advised me that there are current discussions between the Court and the Federal Magistrates Service (FMS) regarding the transfer of funds from the Court to the FMS to fund the appointments of the two new federal magistrates in Melbourne and Adelaide. Subject to the final amount of the funding transfer agreed to between the Family Court and the FMS, the Family Court hopes to retain one full-time SES Registrar as well as a second SES Registrar on a part-time basis in Brisbane. Until the final amount of the funding transfer is agreed, the Family Court is not able to make a commitment to the continuation of two full-time SES Registrar positions in Brisbane.

Immigration: Detainees

(Question No. 1861)

Mr Kerr asked the Attorney-General, upon notice, on 14 May 2003:

(1) What arrangements are in place between the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions and the Australian Federal Police to ensure that persons charged with assaulting immigration detainees appear in court.

(2) Will he examine the allegations made in an article by Mr Russell Skelton published in *The Age* that federal law enforcement agencies are blaming each other for the bungled non-appearance in court of three former Woomera ACM security guards accused of assaulting an unaccompanied Afghan boy aged 13.

(3) Have these serious allegations been followed up.

(4) Which agency was responsible for the error and what steps have been, or are being, taken to ensure that the alleged offenders appear in court.

(5) If the allegations are not correct, what did occur and what was the cause of the breakdown in the proper processing of these matters.

Mr Williams—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) to (5) Where there is an allegation of an assault on someone at an immigration detention centre, the Australian Federal Police (AFP) may investigate the allegation. Where the AFP is satisfied that the allegation should be referred for prosecution, they will prepare a brief of evidence that is passed to the Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions (CDPP).
The role of the CDPP is to assess the brief in accordance with the Prosecution Policy of the Commonwealth. In South Australia, if the brief satisfies the requirements of the Prosecution Policy, a complaint and summons is sent to the AFP for swearing and signing and for service on the defendant.

If there is difficulty in serving a defendant, the CDPP has to request an adjournment while steps are taken to locate the defendant.

On 21 December 2001, allegations of assault against three Australian Correctional Management employees were referred to the AFP. The three men were alleged to have assaulted an immigration detainee, then aged about 12 years old. The assault was alleged to have occurred during a riot at the Woomera Immigration Reception and Processing Centre on 19 December 2001.

Following an investigation of the alleged incident, briefs of evidence were forwarded by the AFP to the CDPP on 7 June 2002. Having assessed the briefs, the CDPP prepared complaints and summonses against each of the three men for a charge of assault contrary to section 39 of the Criminal Law Consolidation Act 1935 (SA) by virtue of section 4 of the Commonwealth Places (Application of Laws) Act 1970 (Cth). These were forwarded to the AFP on 22 July 2002 to be sworn by the informant and for service. The complaints were sworn on 24 July 2002 and were returnable to the Port Augusta Magistrates Court on 2 September 2002.

Prior to 2 September 2002, the AFP advised the CDPP that the summonses had not yet been served on any of the three men and accordingly it was necessary for an adjournment to be requested. The whereabouts of one of the men was unknown. Another had been located in New South Wales and arrangements were being made to serve him. The third man was known to have departed Australia for New Zealand on 15 April 2002, before the complaint had been laid.

On 2 September 2002, the hearing date was adjourned to 2 October 2002 and on that date adjourned to 25 November 2002. On 14 October 2002, the AFP served the man known to be in NSW. The AFP subsequently advised the CDPP that the second man still in Australia had been located.

Prior to 25 November 2002, the CDPP decided after reviewing the available evidence that there was insufficient evidence to proceed against the two men still residing in Australia and these matters were withdrawn on 25 November 2002. A warrant was issued for the third man who had left Australia for New Zealand. The AFP located his address in New Zealand in December 2002. The CDPP reviewed the available evidence against the man and decided that it was insufficient to prosecute and the complaint and warrant were withdrawn on 4 June 2003.

Health: Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome

(Question No. 1866)

Mr Kerr asked the Minister representing the Minister for Health and Ageing, upon notice, on 14 May 2003:

(1) Can the Minister explain why constituents in the electorate of Denison who are concerned about the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) outbreak cannot access disposable dust and filter masks at chemists.

(2) Are these masks extremely difficult to source in Australia; if so, in the current climate of fear overs SARS and acts of biological terrorism, why is the Government not working to ease those legitimate fears of citizens by ensuring the emergency masks are freely available.

Mr Andrews—The Minister for Health and Ageing has provided the following answer to the honourable member’s question:

(1) Commonwealth, State and Territory government agencies have acted promptly to implement effective control measures to minimise the risk of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS).
Australia’s response has involved active clinical surveillance, enhanced border control and quarantine measures, supporting laboratory and research activities, and regular communication with health professionals and the general public. In addition, the Commonwealth has declared SARS a quarantinable illness.

The Government understands the level of community concern about the risk of SARS. However, only a small number of probable SARS cases have been identified in Australia, all these cases have recovered, and no other people were subsequently infected.

The Commonwealth Government has led the development of relevant response protocols including the release and review of Infection Control Guidelines for SARS.

Health authorities in Australia have recommended that appropriate filter face-masks should be worn by health care workers who may be exposed to possible SARS patients. General dust masks are not effective against the SARS virus. Australia’s health authorities have not recommended the general use of face-masks in response to the SARS outbreak.

(2) The Department of Health and Ageing is in regular contact with suppliers of suitable filter face-masks to ensure an adequate supply is available where required. Suppliers are also checking the level of demand by health professionals to ensure a shortage does not occur.

Comprehensive information about Australia’s SARS control measures is available through the Department of Health and Ageing’s website (www.health.gov.au).

The Department of Health and Ageing has also established an information hotline (1800 004 599) to handle enquiries about SARS. To date, over 32,000 calls to this hotline number have been answered.

**Immigration: Asylum Seekers**

(Question No. 1867)

Mr Laurie Ferguson asked the Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs, upon notice, on 14 May 2003:

(1) Has his attention been drawn to an article in *The Courier-Mail* newspaper of 24 January 2003 headed “Neighbourly teams to welcome migrants”.

(2) Was the newspaper correct in reporting that he proposes to reintroduce Good Neighbour Councils to help break down the barriers between new migrants and established citizens; if so, when will this initiative commence and what is the Budget allocation to support it; if not, has he sought to correct the newspaper’s report.

(3) Can he confirm that both the number of volunteer Community Support for Refugees (CSR) groups and the number of registered CSR volunteers has declined substantially since the introduction of the current Government’s Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Strategy (IHSS); if so, what action, if any, does the Government propose to take to seek to reverse this trend which flies in the face of the Minister’s stated intentions.

Mr Hardgrave—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) Yes.

(2) The notion of re-inventing the former Good Neighbour Councils in a contemporary, multicultural form was one of a number of possibilities raised by stakeholders in community consultations held for the Review of Settlement Services for Migrants and Humanitarian Entrants. My comments, reported in the article in *The Courier Mail*, were made in that context.

The final report of the Review, released on 27 May 2003, focuses more broadly on revising arrangements for volunteers in order to re-invigorate their involvement in settlement services. I
will be consulting further with the community in July and August this year as to how best to enable volunteers to extend a practical hand of welcome to new migrants that embodies the spirit of the former Good Neighbour Councils.

(3) There is no data available to support the suggestion that the overall number of individual volunteers involved in humanitarian settlement has declined since the introduction of the IHSS.

In November 1999, just prior to the introduction of the IHSS, there were 250 volunteer Community Refugee Settlement Scheme (CRSS) groups. DIMIA does not have data on the number of individual volunteers in each group, which varied between groups and over time.

There are currently 148 groups registered under the CSR comprising 1,136 members in all States and Territories. In addition, an unknown but substantial number of volunteers, not registered with the CSR, are working directly with funded IHSS providers. These volunteers are recruited and managed directly by the funded providers. There are also still further volunteers who contribute to humanitarian settlement as home tutors under the Australian Migrant English Program (AMEP) and through their involvement with Migrant Resource Centres (MRC’s) and Community Settlement Services Scheme (CSSS) funded organisations.

**Multicultural Affairs: Living in Harmony Program**

*(Question No. 1869)*

Mr Laurie Ferguson asked the Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs, upon notice, on 14 May 2003:

(1) As part of its responsibility for the Living in Harmony program, does his Department systematically collect data on threats to community harmony as a result of racism and religious prejudice; if so, what data are collected and what methodology is utilised in doing so; if not, what performance information does the Department use to assess the success or otherwise of its actions to promote harmony between people of different cultural, ethnic and religious backgrounds.

(2) Does his Department liaise regularly with: (a) other Commonwealth agencies, such as the Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission and ATSIC, (b) relevant State and Territory ethnic affairs and anti-discrimination agencies, and (c) national non-government organisations, to share information on the incidence of (i) hate-related violence, vandalism and intimidation against organisations and places of worship, and (ii) complaints of racial or religious discrimination or vilification; if so, which organisations exchange such information with his Department and how does the Department use this information; if not, will he initiate action to do so.

(3) Did his Department implement any specific measures to combat racism and religious vilification in connection with the war against Iraq; if so, what are the details of the measures taken and what funds were devoted to this purpose; if not, why not.

Mr Hardgrave—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) Information on threats to community harmony resulting from racism and religious prejudice is collected by my Department in Central Office as well as in State and Territory Offices. This includes information from other government departments and agencies, and liaison with thousands of community organisations, groups and individuals around Australia, as well as the results of academic and other surveys, other published material and media monitoring.

That data informs the direction of the Living in Harmony initiative in its objective of addressing racism and promoting harmony between people and groups of different cultural backgrounds. For example, the priority target areas for the 2003 grants round – promoting inter-faith understanding and promoting harmony among culturally diverse young Australians – were identified from analysis of the extensive information collected on threats to community harmony, particularly post 11 September 2001 and during 2002.
Within this context, the success of the Government’s actions to promote harmony between people of different cultural, ethnic and religious backgrounds through the Living in Harmony initiative is assessed using an on-going performance management framework. The collection of performance information is required by the funding agreements for Living in Harmony projects.

The success of the partnership and information strategy elements of the initiative is exhibited in the way business corporations, key national organisations and other levels of government show support through their participation in partnership projects addressing issues of national significance, and their participation in Harmony Day.

The 2003 Harmony Day activities were the largest in the five years of the Commonwealth Government’s Living in Harmony initiative. Most encouraging was the increasing interest by schools and young people in Harmony Day. For example, this year saw schools, community organisations, businesses and agencies register 655 special events to demonstrate their support for community harmony in Australia. This was a 115% increase compared to Harmony Day 2002.

(2) My Department conducts ongoing liaison with other Commonwealth agencies, relevant State and Territory community relations and anti-discrimination and multicultural agencies and national non-government organisations to share information on, and analysis of, hate-related violence, vandalism and intimidation, and racial and religious discrimination. These agencies include the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, Commonwealth Government departments, State and Territory Community Relations and Multicultural Affairs Commissions, State Premier’s Departments, and community organisations like the Federation of Ethnic Communities Councils of Australia and the Executive Council of Australian Jewry.

Information from these sources is not the only way my Department obtains a picture of the state of community relations in Australia. Through its Community Liaison Officer network my Department also engages directly with thousands of communities and their representatives around the country. This contact is being undertaken virtually every day in every capital city and in many regional centres. I speak to these communities myself as often as I can, as I did in most capital cities at the time of the recent conflict in Iraq.

This information is used to inform the development of strategic responses to threats to community harmony in Australia. For example, information garnered through these various means informed the development of the Commonwealth’s Community Relations Strategy put into effect following the Bali bombings of October 2002 and in the lead up to and during the recent Iraq conflict. This ongoing Community Relations Strategy to address potential threats to community harmony had been developed in the aftermath of the attacks of 11 September 2001, and has been very effective.

(3) As international events leading up to the war in Iraq evolved, the community relations strategy developed after September 11 was re-activated to address potential acts of racially motivated violence in Australia. This strategy had many levels: action was taken at Prime Ministerial, Ministerial and Parliamentary levels, at officials level and in communities around Australia.

The need for national unity was stressed through speeches at many community events by the Prime Minister, the Minister for Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs and myself. Consultations and information sharing were conducted with the Ministerial Council of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs and the Standing Committee of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs, as well as with the Council for Multicultural Australia and the Inter-Departmental Committee on Multicultural Affairs. I met representatives of various communities, including the Muslim and Arabic communities in Canberra, Perth, Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Adelaide and Hobart. Departmental officers undertook constant consultation with communities and monitoring of community tensions. There were a number of innovative community initiatives where Australians of all backgrounds reached out to Iraqi and other affected communities. For example, the
Australian National Dialogue of Christians, Muslims and Jews, which I launched in March 2003, took a proactive stance in providing leadership and promoting community harmony within its different communities.

Overall, affected communities indicated they felt well supported by the Government and the Australian community, and appreciated the opportunity to express their concerns to the Government.

No additional funds were specifically devoted to this purpose. Existing Departmental resources were sufficient to develop and support the strategy.

The Living in Harmony community grants program 2003-2004 also highlighted funding priorities for projects aimed at:

- Promoting inter-faith understanding, such as providing local residents with the opportunity to learn about other faiths in the community, or providing opportunities for collective understanding between religious groups as ways of addressing community disharmony.
- Promoting harmony amongst culturally diverse young Australians, such as where racism, prejudice and inter-generational conflict may have led to youth justice issues, negative portrayals of community groups and threats to community harmony.

A number of existing Living in Harmony grants also work to address racism at the local level.

**Human Rights: Cuba**

*(Question No. 1871)*

Mr Danby asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs, upon notice, on 14 May 2003:

1. Is Australia a member of the United Nations Human Rights Commission (HRC).
2. Is he aware of the HRC’s resolution on Cuba during April 2003.
3. Can he provide a copy of the resolution as moved and as passed, along with any amendments that were proposed during the debate.
4. How did Australia vote on each of the motions and amendments.
5. How did all other member countries vote on the motion and amendments.
6. Can he confirm the report in The New York Times on 18 April that nearly 100 independent writers and advocates for democracy in Cuba have been arrested; if so, (a) can he provide the names of those arrested, (b) what is the status of these people, (c) have they been charged and what are the charges, (d) have they been tried; if so (e) have they been convicted, and (f) have they been sentenced and to what have they been sentenced.
7. Does the Government believe these people are political prisoners; if so, what action has the Government taken to protest their incarceration.
8. Will the Government raise this issue of human rights along with other democratic countries at the UN Human Rights Commission at the next opportunity.
9. Is the UN Human Rights Commission an effective and appropriate forum for discussing human rights violations; if not, what is the most appropriate and effective forum for discussing human rights violations.

Mr Downer—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

1. Yes
2. Yes
3. Resolution 2003/13 on the Situation of Human Rights in Cuba is at Attachment A. During the debate, amendments on the resolution were proposed by Costa Rica and Cuba. The amendments
proposed by Costa Rica (E/CN.4/2003/L.74) are at Attachment B and by Cuba (E/CN.4/2003/L.77) are at Attachment C.

(4) Australia co-sponsored and voted for the resolution on the Situation of Human Rights in Cuba led by Peru, Uruguay and Costa Rica at the 59th Session on the Commission on Human Rights.

Australia voted for the Costa Rican amendment to the Cuba resolution which would have had created a new operative paragraph calling upon the Government of Cuba to ensure full respect for all human rights and fundamental freedom of expression and the right to a fair trial, and expressing concern about the recent detention, summary prosecution and harsh sentencing of numerous members of the political opposition.

Australia voted against an amendment proposed by the Cuban delegation (E/CN.4/2003/L.77) that would have had the Commission urge an immediate ending to the unilateral embargo against Cuba imposed by the United States of America, citing the embargo as a violation of human rights.


In favour (24): Armenia, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Cameroon, Canada, Chile, Costa Rica, Croatia, France, Germany, Guatemala, Ireland, Japan, Mexico, Paraguay, Peru, Poland, Republic of Korea, Sierra Leone, Sweden, United Kingdom, United States, and Uruguay.

Against (20): Algeria, Bahrain, Burkina Faso, China, Cuba, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Gabon, India, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Malaysia, Pakistan, Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, Ukraine, Venezuela, Viet Nam and Zimbabwe.

Abstentions (9): Argentina, Brazil, Kenya, Senegal, Sri Lanka, Swaziland, Thailand, Togo and Uganda.

The amendment proposed by Costa Rica (E/CN.4/2003/L.74) was defeated by a roll-call vote of 15 in favour and 31 against, with 7 abstentions.

In favour (15): Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Costa Rica, Croatia, France, Germany, Ireland, Japan, Poland, Republic of Korea, Sweden, United Kingdom and United States.

Against (31): Algeria, Argentina, Armenia, Bahrain, Burkina Faso, China, Cuba, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Gabon, Guatemala, India, Kenya, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Malaysia, Mexico, Pakistan, Paraguay, Peru, Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Sudan, Swaziland, Syrian Arab Republic, Togo, Uganda, Ukraine, Uruguay, Venezuela, Viet Nam and Zimbabwe.

Abstentions (7): Brazil, Cameroon, Chile, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Sri Lanka and Thailand.

The amendment proposed by Cuba (E/CN.4/2003/L.77) was rejected by a roll-call vote of 17 in favour and 26 against, with 10 abstentions.

In favour (17): Algeria, Burkina Faso, China, Cuba, Gabon, Kenya, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Malaysia, Russian Federation, South Africa, Sudan, Swaziland, Syrian Arab Republic, Togo, Venezuela, Viet Nam and Zimbabwe.

Against (26): Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Bahrain, Belgium, Costa Rica, Croatia, Canada, Chile, Democratic Republic of the Congo, France, Germany, Guatemala, Ireland, Japan, Mexico, Paraguay, Peru, Poland, Republic of Korea, Saudi Arabia and Sweden.

Abstentions (10): Brazil, Cameroon, India, Pakistan, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Uganda, Ukraine, United Kingdom, United States and Uruguay.

(6) On 24 March our Embassy in Mexico City, accredited to Cuba, confirmed the arrest of over 70 people

(a) No
(b) These people have been arrested, tried and sentenced
(c) Cuba’s Consul General advised the Minister for Foreign Affairs by letter dated 16 April 2003 that “several groups of people were charged with treason and subversion”. (They were charged under Article 91 of the Cuban Penal Code, Law 62 of 1987 relating to “Actions against the independence or territorial integrity of the State” and several articles of Law 88 on the “Protection of National Independence and the Economy of Cuba”)
(d) Yes
(e) Yes
(f) Yes. Sentences ranged from 6 to 28 years imprisonment.

(7) The people have been arrested and sentenced under that part of the Cuban penal code that protects the political system. Australia shares others’ concerns about the state of human rights and political freedoms in Cuba and has co-sponsored various UN resolutions condemning Cuba’s human rights record. Australia’s vote in favour of the proposed Costa Rican amendment to this year’s CHR resolution on Cuba reflected our concern about the state of human rights in Cuba (see answer to 4 above).

(8) Australia voted for the Costa Rican amendment to the Resolution on the Situation of Human Rights in Cuba at the recent 59th Session of the Commission on Human Rights which expressed concern about the recent detention, summary prosecution and harsh sentencing of numerous members of the political opposition.

(9) The Commission on Human Rights is the main body in the United Nations dealing with human rights issues and has a wide mandate to deal with any matter relating to human rights. Australia is actively involved in the Commission and in 2003 is the Vice-Chair of the Commission.

Attachment A:

Situation of human rights in Cuba
Commission on Human Rights Decision 2003/13

The Commission on Human Rights,
Taking into account its resolution 2002/18 of 19 April 2002,
Considering that in the above-mentioned resolution the Commission requested the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to take steps to send a personal representative with a view to cooperation between his Office and the Government of Cuba in the implementation of the resolution,
Bearing in mind that the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights has proceeded to appoint Ms. Christine Chanet as his personal representative,
1. Expresses its satisfaction with the appointment of Ms. Christine Chanet as personal representative of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, for the implementation of resolution 2002/18 of 19 April 2002;
2. Urges the Government of Cuba to receive the personal representative of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and to provide all the facilities necessary for her to be able to fulfil the mandate contained in resolution 2002/18;
3. Decides to consider this matter further at its sixtieth session, under the same agenda item, in connection with which the personal representative of the High Commissioner will submit her report on the implementation of resolution 2002/18.

54th meeting
17 April 2003
[Adopted by a recorded vote of 24 votes to 20, with 9 abstentions.
Situation of human rights in Cuba
59th Session of the Commission on Human Rights
Costa Rica: amendment to draft resolution E/CN.4/2003/L.2
Insert a new operative paragraph 1 reading as follows:
1. Calls upon the Government of Cuba to ensure full respect for all human rights and fundamental freedoms, in particular the freedom of expression and the right to a fair trial, and, expressing its deep concern about the recent detention, summary prosecution and harsh sentencing of numerous members of the political opposition, urges the Government of Cuba to release all those persons immediately;

Situation of human rights in Cuba
59th Session of the Commission on Human Rights
Cuba: amendment to draft resolution E/CN.4/2003/L.2
Add the following two new operative paragraphs:
1. Urges the immediate ending of the unilateral and illegal embargo against Cuba imposed by the United States of America, which constitutes a flagrant violation of the human rights of the Cuban people, in particular their rights to food and health;
2. Requests the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to undertake an evaluation of the effects of the continuous terrorist acts carried out with impunity against the people of Cuba from the territory of the United States of America on the enjoyment of the human rights of the Cuban people, in particular on the enjoyment of their right to life;

Defence: National Service Medals
(Question No. 1874)
Mr Danby asked the Minister Assisting the Minister for Defence, upon notice, on 14 May 2003:
1. Since the introduction of the National Service Medal how many people have been entitled to receive it.
2. To date, how many applications for a National Service Medal have been: (a) received and (b) issued; (i) nationally, (ii) in each state and territory, and (iii) in the electoral division of Melbourne Ports.
3. What is the average time taken to process an application for a National Service Medal.
4. What is the longest time taken to process an application for a National Service Medal.
5. Have there been any delays experienced in the delivery of National Service Medals; if so, why.
6. What is the total number of National Service Medal applications currently outstanding.
7. What steps has the Minister taken to address the backlog of National Service Medal applications.
8. When will the backlog of applications for the National Service Medals be dealt with.

Mrs Vale—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:
1. Approximately 330,000.
2. (a) Approximately 155,000 applications have been received.
   (b) Over 70,000. However, identification of applicants within electoral divisions is not separately identified for processing applications. Consequently, this information cannot be readily generated and a manual search would require diversion of the scarce resources now utilised to process applications, resulting in increased delays.
(3) Since February 2002, when applications were first formally requested and received by Defence, the average time from date of receipt of applications to date of delivery of medal was six months. In December 2002, the introduction of a standardised departmental personnel recording system led to the loss of some systems functionality. More recently, staff shortages resulting from the move of the Army Medals Section to Canberra added to the delay.

(4) Up to 12 months.

(5) In terms of the date of dispatch from the Department to the date of delivery to the recipient, there have been no delays reported.

(6) The Australian National Service Medal Team currently has a backlog of 50,000 applications awaiting action.

(7) Concentrating all Directorate of Honours and Awards staff over Canberra, Queanbeyan and Melbourne into Canberra in February 2003 has enabled more resources to be used to counter the backlog.

(8) All available resources are being used to redress the current backlog now. As a result, backlogs are expected to reduce considerably into the next few months.

Iraq

Mr Danby asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs, upon notice, on 14 May 2003:

(1) Does he support the lifting of sanctions against Iraq.

(2) Does he support the termination of the oil-for-food program.

(3) Is he able to confirm the report by Ms Claudia Rosett in The New York Times on 18 April 2003 to the effect that under the oil-for-food program, Iraq has received: (a) boats and boat accessories from France; (b) sport supplies from Lebanon, (c) TV equipment from Russia, (d) cars from Russia and Syria, (e) powdered milk from Saudi Arabia and Libya, and (f) detergent from Syria, Lebanon, Libya, Algeria and Sudan.

(4) Are Syria, Lebanon, Libya, Algeria and Sudan significant manufacturers or exporters of detergent.

(5) Are Syria, Lebanon, Libya, Algeria and Sudan known as high quality manufacturers of detergent.

(6) Are Russia and Syria significant manufacturers or exporters of cars or known for high quality car manufacturing.

(7) Are Saudi Arabia and Libya significant manufacturers or exporters of powdered milk or known for high quality powdered milk.

(8) Why were such products purchased from these countries, and not from countries with a better reputation for production of detergent, powdered milk and cars.

(9) Were any products provided from Australia under the oil-for-food program; if so can he list all material supplied to Iraq under the oil-for-food program, and the companies that supplied them.

(10) Is he aware of allegations of kickbacks, smuggling and corruption within the oil-for-food program; if so, what investigations are under way to investigate these allegations.

(11) Is he concerned that the oil-for-food program may have been used for kickbacks, smuggling or corruption, including supported Iraq’s alleged Weapons of Mass Destruction or propaganda programs.

(12) What efforts, if any, is his Ministry making to obtain documents relating to individuals from this country that have benefited from the oil-for-food program by receiving corrupt payments.

Mr Downer—The answer to the honourable member’s questions is as follows:
(1) Yes. The Government put in place quickly regulations giving effect to the provisions of UN Security Council Resolution 1483 of 22 May which lifted sanctions against Iraq.

(2) Yes. UN Security Council Resolution 1483 also provided for the phasing out of the Oil-For-Food Programme within six months of the date of the adoption of the resolution, i.e., 22 November 2003.

(3) (a) No. (b) No. (c) No. (d) No. (e) No. (f) No.

(4) Syria, Yes; Lebanon, No: I have no information about the status of Libya, Algeria or Sudan as significant exporters or manufacturers of detergent.

(5) I have no information about the quality of detergent manufactured by Syria; Lebanon Algeria, Libya, or Sudan.

(6) According to the International Organisation of Motor Vehicle Manufacturers (provisional figures), in 2002 Russia produced 980,736 light vehicles, ranking it the world’s 12th largest producer by country and vehicle type. Syria is not a significant producer of motor vehicles.

(7) Saudi Arabia manufactures and exports powdered mild. I have no information about the status of Libya as a significant manufacturer or exporter of powdered milk, or about the quality of any powdered milk made by Libya.

(8) This was a decision made by the former Government of Iraq.

(9) Yes. While the value of wheat exports during the period of the oil-for-food program is not publicly available, I understand that wheat accounted for virtually 100 per cent of Australia’s exports to Iraq during this period. Wheat was exported to Iraq by the Australian Wheat Board Limited.

(10) Yes. I am not aware of any investigations being conducted into these allegations.

(11) It would be of concern if such allegations were proved correct.

(12) I am not aware of any individuals from this country that have benefited from the oil-for-food program by receiving corrupt payments.

**China: Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Outbreak**

(Question No. 1878)

Mr Danby asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs, upon notice, on 15 May 2003:

(1) When did he or his Department first become aware of the SARS outbreak in the People’s Republic of China (China).

(2) When were the first media reports of the SARS outbreak: (a) anywhere in the world, (b) in China, and (c) in the Chinese press.

(3) When did the Australian Embassy in Beijing or other posts in China report the outbreak of SARS in China to his Department.

(4) Could the Minister detail all advice he has received from the Embassy in Beijing.

(5) Given the underreporting of the HIV/AIDS outbreak decades ago in China, is the Department or the Australian Embassy in China concerned about the reporting of epidemics by the Chinese authorities.

(6) Between the reporting of the first case in early November and the admission of the World Health Organisation delegation to China, (a) what were the nature of Australian travel advisories to China, (b) when did they change and (c) what was the first advice, and the nature of any updated advice, in that period.

(7) Apart from issuing travel advisories, what efforts did Australia take to warn travellers to China and Hong Kong about the SARS outbreak.

Mr Downer—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:
(1) The Australian Consulate-General in Guangzhou first reported the outbreak of an unidentified infection then known as atypical pneumonia on 12 February.

(2) It appears the first media reports of atypical pneumonia occurred on 3 and 17 January, when two Guangzhou newspapers reported cases of an unusual disease in two provincial cities. The Guangdong health authorities held a press conference on 11 February at which they announced the extent of an epidemic in Guangdong. There was widespread reporting of this conference in the media (both in Guangzhou and Hong Kong) on 12 February. The first global alerts issued by the World Health Organisation (WHO) about cases of atypical pneumonia occurred on 12 March. On 15 March the WHO issued an emergency travel advisory which for the first time referred to the outbreak of SARS and provided guidance to travellers, but contained no recommendation restricting travel.

(3) As noted in (1) the first report was from the Australian Consulate-General in Guangzhou on 12 February, but at that time the disease was described as atypical pneumonia. The term "SARS" had not yet been coined. The Australian Embassy in Beijing first reported on SARS on 27 March 2003, following confirmation of the first cases in Beijing.

(4) Following its initial report on 27 March, the Embassy in Beijing has provided extensive advice on a broad range of SARS-related issues on a regular basis. These reports include national as well as Beijing statistics on probable cases and deaths and reports on meetings with Chinese officials. Developments relating to the spread of the disease, its economic impact and staff health and welfare issues have also been covered on a regular basis.

(5) The Department is aware that the WHO expressed concern about China's reporting of SARS cases. The Chinese authorities have been cooperating with the WHO to work through these issues. China's Ministry of Health has acknowledged weaknesses in the public health system affected its preparedness to deal with the SARS crisis. The Chinese Government has advised it is putting in place measures to deal with future public health emergencies, and has allocated 2.9 million yuan to set up disease control and prevention centres throughout China over the coming two years.

(6) A WHO team arrived in Beijing on 23 March at the invitation of the Chinese Government. On 26 March China made its first official report to the WHO, highlights of which were made public that day, indicating that they had SARS cases (792 probable cases and 31 deaths). This report included previously unknown and unreported SARS cases dating back to 16 November 2002. Prior to this China had reported no cases of SARS to the WHO. On 26 March, on the basis of advice from the Department of Health and Ageing (DoHA), the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's (DFAT) travel advice for China was updated to advise "Travellers should be aware that the World Health Organisation has issued an alert regarding a contagious form of respiratory illness known as Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS)". This was updated on 28 March with specific reference to SARS cases in Guangdong Province. On 1 April, revised travel advice was issued strongly recommending that Australians consider deferring non-essential travel to China, in particular Guangdong Province, and to the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR). This was subsequently updated to include additional provinces and regions. The WHO first issued a travel advisory restricting non-essential travel to Guangdong Province and Hong Kong SAR on 2 April and later extended this to include Beijing and Shanxi Province on 23 April.

(7) Beyond travel advisories covering mainland China, Hong Kong SAR and Taiwan, which were regularly updated as developments warranted, DFAT has in close consultation with the Department of Health and Ageing (DoHA) issued a SARS Travel Bulletin which contains practical precautionary advice on measures to minimise the risks of contracting SARS. DoHA and the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service (AQIS) have instituted a comprehensive program to inform the Australian public including: a SARS information hotline; SARS media releases from the Commonwealth Medical Officer; distribution of leaflets to departing and arriving passengers; and

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
SARS Health Information Cards for incoming passengers. Other measures undertaken by DFAT include: communication with the Australian expatriate communities through liaison with Australian Chambers of Commerce and briefings of Australian community members in SARS-affected areas; advice to enquirers; and e-mailed advice from our posts to registered Australians on topics such as the spread of the disease through individual provinces, useful website links, advice from local medical clinics, information hotlines, quarantine and travel restrictions.

**HIH Insurance: Royal Commission Report**

(Question No. 1881)

Mr Murphy asked the Treasurer, upon notice, on 15 May 2003:

(1) To what extent does the Government support the findings and conclusions of Commissioner the Hon. Justice Owen that are outlined in his Royal Commission Report into the failure of the HIH Insurance group.

(2) Will the Government implement all of Justice Owen’s 61 recommendations; if not, which recommendations does the Government intend not to implement and why

Mr Costello—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) The Government released the report of the HIH Royal Commission in its entirety on 16 April 2003 and announced its intention in relation to the recommendations concerning APRA governance arrangements and those recommendations that are consistent with the Government’s corporate governance and CLERP 9 proposals.

(2) The Government undertook to consider expeditiously the report’s other recommendations.

**Foreign Affairs: Iraq**

(Question Nos 1887, 1888 and 1889)

Mr Latham asked the Minister representing the Minister for Defence, upon notice, on 26 May 2003:

Has the Government received estimates of the number of civilian casualties in the war in Iraq; if so, what are the details.

Mrs Vale—The Minister for Defence has provided the following answer to the honourable member’s question:

No. The only figures available are those reported by the media.

**Aviation: Albion Park Aerodrome**

(Question No. 1891)

Ms George asked the Minister for Transport and Regional Services, upon notice, on 26 May 2003:

(1) Is he aware of the case of Mr William Murray on whose behalf I have made a number of representations concerning the safety of conducting circuits from runway 16/34 at Albion Park aerodrome.

(2) Is he aware of the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Transport and Regional Services’ response of 5 April 2002 to my representation of 19 December 2001 and his response of 27 August 2002 to my representation of 17 June 2002, both on behalf of Mr. Murray, that circuits could only be conducted from runway 16/34 “due to high terrain to the west of the aerodrome” and that his response was based on advice from CASA that it was their requirement.
(3) Is he aware that (a) the primary residential zone in the area surrounding the airport is to the east of the aerodrome, and (b) the land to the west of the aerodrome is not “high terrain” but is swampland, paddocks and small farms and is only lightly populated; if not, why not.

(4) Will he explain the basis for CASA’s classification of the land to the west of Albion Park aerodrome as “high terrain”.

(5) Is it preferable for aircraft to operate over areas that are lightly populated on both safety and noise grounds; if so, why is it not preferable for aircraft to operate to the west of the Albion Park aerodrome.

(6) Will he or the Parliamentary Secretary intervene to ask CASA to review its classification of land to the west of Albion Park aerodrome as “high terrain”; if not, why not.

Mr Anderson—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) I have been advised about the case of Mr William Murray.

(2) I have been advised that my Parliamentary Secretary responded to both letters and that advice from my Department and CASA was incorporated into the responses.

(3) (a) Yes.

(b) This is not correct. At a distance of approximately 5.5 nautical miles southwest of the aerodrome is Knights Hill with television towers to an elevation of 3160 feet. The 1000-foot contour line extends to within three nautical miles of the aerodrome to the southwest. The maximum elevation obstacle to the east within the same distances is a hill with a quarry south east of the aerodrome with an elevation of only 600 feet. The township of Albion Park Rail is close to the aerodrome to the east and the township of Albion Park is close to the aerodrome on the southwest. While the surface extending from the northwest through to the north and around Lake Illawarra is indeed mostly flat land or water, it is not in the area addressed by Ms George.

(4) Please see above.

(5) While CASA does prefer aircraft to operate over less populated areas, obstacles such as high terrain need to be considered for safety purposes.

(6) No. CASA reviewed the circumstances in replying to this and previous correspondence and will not alter its decision that was made on safety grounds to keep aircraft clear of the terrain.

Throsby Electorate: Benefits

(Question No. 1892)

Ms George asked the Minister representing the Minister for Family and Community Services, upon notice, on 26 May 2003:

(1) How many people in the electoral division of Throsby, in total and for each postcode, are recipients of the (a) Aged Pension, (b) Disability Support Pension, (c) Carer Allowance, (d) Newstart Allowance, (e) Youth Allowance, (f) Parenting Payment Single, (g) Parenting Payment Partnered, (h) Family Tax Benefit A, (i) Family Tax Benefit B, (j) Childcare Benefit, and (k) Rent Assistance.

(2) How many people in the electoral division of Throsby are receiving income assistance as a percentage of the total population of the electoral division of Throsby.

(3) In (a) Australia and (b) the electoral division of Throsby, how many recipients of Family Tax Benefit A received a debt notice in (i) 2000-2001 and (ii) 2001-2002.

(4) In (a) Australia and (b) the electoral division of Throsby, how many recipients of Family Tax Benefit B received a debt notice in (i) 2000-2001 and (ii) 2001-2002.
(5) What was the average Family Tax Benefit debt per family or individual in the electoral division of Throsby in (a) 2000-2001 and (b) 2001-2002.

(6) How many families or individuals received a Family Tax Benefit debt notice despite having informed Centrelink within 14 days of a change in their circumstances.

(7) How many families with a Family Tax Benefit debt had part or all of their tax return withheld to satisfy the debt in (a) 2000-2001 and (b) 2001-2002.

Mr Anthony—The Minister for Family and Community Services has provided the following answer to the honourable member’s question:

(1) Current customers by specific payment and component types.
## Electorate of Throsby – as at 2 May 2003

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Home Postcode</th>
<th>(a) Age Pension</th>
<th>(b) Disability Support Pension</th>
<th>(c) Carer Allowance</th>
<th>(d) Newstart Allowance</th>
<th>(e) Youth Allowance</th>
<th>(f) Parenting Payment (Single)</th>
<th>(g) Parenting Payment (Partnered)</th>
<th>(h) Family Tax Benefit (A)</th>
<th>(i) Family Tax Benefit (B)</th>
<th>(j) Child Care Benefit (Formal)</th>
<th>(k) Rent Assistance</th>
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<td>1 016</td>
<td>506</td>
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<td>&lt;20</td>
<td>&lt;20</td>
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<td>&lt;20</td>
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<td>TOTAL</td>
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<td>2 774</td>
<td>4 079</td>
<td>2 348</td>
<td>3 561</td>
<td>1 156</td>
<td>12 295</td>
<td>8 826</td>
<td>4 972</td>
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</table>

### QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
(2) Current customers by specific payment and component types.

Electorate of Throsby – as at 2 May 2003

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Home Postcode</th>
<th>Income Assistance</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2502</td>
<td>5 823</td>
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<td>2528</td>
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<td>2530</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>OTHER</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>42 359</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Income Assistance is defined as Income Support and/or FTB. Counts for Electorate may be undercounted by up to 10%. Figures represented with <20 are confidential and are not provided to protect the customer’s privacy. Counts under 20 in individual cells have been excluded from totals. The total number of people receiving income assistance is (42 359) and as a percentage of the total population of the electorate of Throsby (121 636) is 35%.

(3) National information provided as at 28 March 2003. Electoral information provided as at 27 December 2002. Please note that debts of Family Tax Benefit A and B cannot be reported separately.

(a) (i) For 2000-2001, 728 458 customers Australia wide incurred a Family Tax Benefit reconciliation debt. Recovery of 519 904 of these debts would have been waived under small debt and transitional waiver provisions.

(a) (ii) For 2000-2001, 4 402 customers in the electorate of Throsby incurred a Family Tax Benefit reconciliation debt. Recovery of 3 298 of these debts would have been waived under small debt and transitional waiver provisions.

(b) (i) For 2001-2002, 542 940 customers Australia wide incurred a Family Tax Benefit reconciliation debt. Recovery of 73 476 of these debts would have been waived under small debt provisions.

(b) (ii) For 2001-2002, 3 253 customers in the electorate of Throsby incurred a Family Tax Benefit reconciliation debt. The number of debts which would have been waived under small debt provisions is unavailable at this time.

(4) Please note that debts of Family Tax Benefit A and B cannot be reported separately. Refer question (3).

(5) (i) For 2000-2001, the average Family Tax Benefit debt amount for the electorate of Throsby was $776.93.

(ii) For 2001-2002, the average Family Tax Benefit debt amount for the electorate of Throsby was $717.52.

(6) This information is not recorded.

(7) According to information provided to Centrelink by the Australian Tax Office (which is not separated into financial years), the number of families with a Family Tax Benefit debt that have had part or all of their tax return withheld to satisfy the debt as of 2 May 2003 was 219 581.
Mr Murphy asked the Minister for the Environment and Heritage, upon notice, on 26 May 2003:

(1) Is he aware of recent development on land known as the Rhodes Peninsula along the foreshore of Homebush Bay.

(2) Which migratory species of birds on the List of Migratory Species under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBCA) are known to make migratory use of Homebush Bay, Rhodes Peninsular and adjoining land and waterways.

(3) Which migratory species listed in the Japan-Australia Migratory Bird Agreement (JAMBA) and China-Australia Migratory Bird Species Agreement (CAMBA) are known to make migratory use of Homebush Bay, Rhodes Peninsular and adjoining land and waterways.

(4) In respect of section 20 of the EPBCA, has the City of Canada Bay, the developer of the land along the Rhodes Peninsula or any other person, sought approval for development activities with a significant impact on those listed migratory bird species known to use Homebush Bay and/or the Rhodes Peninsula; if not, will he require that approval be sought under the EPBCA and if not, why not.

(5) In respect of section 20A of the EPBCA, has any person been found guilty of an offence related to those listed migratory bird species which are known to use Homebush Bay and/or the Rhodes Peninsula as a result of development or other activity; if so, who; if not, why not.

(6) Is he acting to ensure that the development along the foreshore of Rhodes Peninsula does not breach section 211 of the EPBCA; if not, why not.

(7) Have representations been made to the City of Canada Bay, the relevant developers and other parties with respect to their obligations under section 214 of the EPBCA which requires a person taking action that may result in the death or injury of a member of a listed migratory species to notify the Secretary; if not, why not.

(8) Have any permits been issued under sections 215 and 216 of the EPBCA to any person related to the development along the Rhodes Peninsula; if so, (a) how many permits have been issued, (b) for what purpose, (c) to whom, (d) when, and (e) what conditions, if any, were applied to the permits under section 217 of the EPBCA.

Dr Kemp—the answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) Yes.

(2) There are 16 species of migratory birds listed under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act) known to use the Parramatta River, which includes Homebush Bay and Rhodes Peninsular. These are listed in the attached table.

(3) There are 15 species of migratory bird listed in the Japan-Australia Migratory Bird Agreement (JAMBA) and China-Australia Migratory Bird Agreement (CAMBA) known to use the Parramatta River, which includes Homebush Bay and Rhodes Peninsular. These are listed in the attached table.

(4) No. My Department is engaged in ongoing discussions with companies involved in development activities on Rhodes Peninsula, regarding the possible application of the EPBC Act to development in the area.

(5) No. I am not aware of any activity on Rhodes Peninsula that has had a significant impact on listed migratory species and therefore constitutes an offence under the EPBC Act.

(6) No. The site in question is not a Commonwealth area. Section 211 of the EPBC Act therefore does not apply.
(7) No. The site in question is not a Commonwealth area. Section 214 of the EPBC Act therefore does not apply.

(8) No. The site in question is not a Commonwealth area. Sections 215 and 216 of the EPBC Act therefore do not apply.

MIGRATORY BIRDS KNOWN TO USE THE PARRAMATTA RIVER

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common Name</th>
<th>Scientific Name</th>
<th>EPBCA</th>
<th>JAMBA</th>
<th>CAMBA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sandpipers</td>
<td>Scolopacidae</td>
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<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black-tailed Godwit</td>
<td>Limosa limosa</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bar-tailed Godwit</td>
<td>Limosa lapponica</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
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<tr>
<td>Whimbrel</td>
<td>Numenius phaeopus</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Curlew</td>
<td>Numenius madagascariensis</td>
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<tr>
<td>Marsh Sandpiper</td>
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<td>Y</td>
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<tr>
<td>Common Greenshank</td>
<td>Tringa nebularia</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grey-tailed Tattler</td>
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<td>Red-necked Stint</td>
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<td>Plovers and Lapwings</td>
<td>Charadriidae</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pacific Golden Plover</td>
<td>Pluvialis fulva</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Double-banded Plover ^</td>
<td>Charadrius bicinctus</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


^The Double Banded Plover migrates from Australia to New Zealand, rather than north through Asia to breeding grounds in the Arctic Circle, therefore is listed as an EPBCA migratory species, but is not included in the JAMBA and CAMBA lists.

Research and Development: Funding

(Question No. 1900)

Mr Fitzgibbon asked the Minister for Industry, Tourism and Resources, upon notice, on 26 May 2003:

(1) Did his predecessor announce research and development funding on 18 February 2000 for the adaptation of gas-to-liquids technology to Australian conditions.

(2) Was a grant paid to Syntroleum and was it for the Sweetwater project on the Burrup Peninsular.

(3) Can he provide details of the deal including the size of the grant, whether it involved a non-transferable technology license, and the obligations of Syntroleum.

(4) Were expressions of interest called for the grant funding; if so, were there other expressions of interest.

(5) Has construction commenced on the Sweetwater project; if not, when does he expect it to commence and can he explain where the $30 million is now.

Mr Hockey—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) Yes.
(2) The Commonwealth approved the payment of an investment incentive subject to Syntroleum satisfying certain preconditions.

(3) $70 million was largely made available in a number of tranches, subject to Syntroleum satisfying the relevant preconditions for each tranche.

(4) No.

(5) In early 2000 Syntroleum began developing the Sweetwater Project.

On 30 September 2002, Syntroleum announced it was considering termination of the Sweetwater project. On 29 October 2002, Syntroleum confirmed suspension of the project.

**People’s Mojahedin Organisation of Iran**
*(Question No. 1901)*

Ms Plibersek asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs, upon notice, on 26 May 2003:

(1) Does the Australian government support United States reported military action against the People’s Mojahedin Organisation of Iran (PMOI) in Northern Iraq; if so, for what reason.

(2) Did the PMOI declare neutrality in the recent Iraq war; if so, why was it targeted by allied troops.

Mr Downer—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) Yes. Elements of the PMOI fought alongside Iraqi troops against coalition forces. The PMOI has been declared a terrorist organisation by the US, UK and the EU. I gazetted the PMOI as a terrorist organisation in Australia. The Government considers that the PMOI should be held to account for their many crimes.

(2) No.

**Immigration: Asylum Seekers**
*(Question No. 1902)*

Ms Plibersek asked the Minister for Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs, upon notice, on 26 May 2003:

(1) How many Iranian asylum seekers are held (a) in each Australian immigration detention centre, (b) on Manus Island, and (c) on Nauru.

(2) Did the Charge d’Affairs from Iran, Mr Eshagh Al Habib, recently visit the Baxter detention centre; if so, what was the purpose of this visit.

(3) Is it possible that Iranian asylum seekers would be intimidated by such a visit.

(4) Can he detail Amnesty International’s assessment of the human rights situation in Iran.

(5) What monitoring is undertaken by Australia of the safety of Iranian asylum seekers who return to Iran from Australia.

Mr Ruddock—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) As at 16 May 2003, Iranians held in immigration detention were as follows:

(a) Australia:
   - Baxter IDF, 155
   - Maribyrnong IDC, 1
   - Perth IDC, 2
   - Port Hedland IRPC, 67
   - Villawood IDC, 21
   - Woomera RHP, 7
Alternative Detention, 11

Those accommodated in processing centres on Nauru and Manus Island are not in detention.

Numbers accommodated there are as follows:

(b) Manus Island: 0
(c) Nauru: 2

(2) The Charge d’Affairs for Iran, Mr Eshagh Al Habib, visited Baxter on 15 May 2003 to provide an opportunity for Iranian nationals to discuss arrangements for return to Iran if they wished to do so. Consular visits of this nature are common practice.

(3) The Iranian residents were advised in person and in writing that Mr Al Habib would be visiting the centre on 15 May 2003. When Mr Habib visited the centre the Iranian residents had the opportunity on a voluntary basis to meet with Mr Al Habib individually, away from their compound. The decision whether or not to meet with Mr Al Habib was one for the detainees. A number decided to meet with Mr Al Habib while others chose not to.

(4) The protection visa determination process requires claims for refugee protection to be assessed against the criteria in the United Nations Refugee Convention and according to relevant Australian laws and regulations. As part of this process, my Department draws on a broad range of country information, including information from other countries, world wide media reporting, academic works, and advice from international agencies and from a broad range of groups including the UNHCR and human rights groups such as Amnesty International.

However, information in regard to Amnesty International’s assessment of the human rights situation in Iran is a matter for that organisation.

(5) The Australian Government takes seriously its obligation not to refoule refugees, but also respects the principles of state sovereignty and does not monitor non-Australian citizens in foreign countries.

Centrelink: Netherlands Pension Recipients
(Question No. 1904)

Mr Ripoll asked the Minister representing the Minister for Family and Community Services, upon notice, on 26 May 2003:

(1) In respect of recovery action taken by Centrelink against recipients of both Dutch and Australian Age Pensions, how long was Centrelink aware that its computer system was inadequate and allowing recipients to incur debts as a result of overpayments.

(2) Is it the case that a large number of debts exceed $5 000.

(3) Is Centrelink acting to recover these overpayments; if so, is legal action contemplated against any of the recipients.

(4) Is the Minister aware that a number of recipients of Dutch pensions had reported CPI increases in their Dutch pensions to Centrelink but that this was not recorded on the computer system and subsequently Centrelink did not initiate any action.

(5) With which countries is Centrelink seeking to data match pension payments.

Mr Anthony—The Minister for Family and Community Services has provided the following answer to the honourable member’s question:

(1) A review of customers has revealed the majority of Netherlands pension recipients correctly informed Centrelink of increases to their overseas pension and have been paid the correct amount of Age Pension from Centrelink.
The review has found that some Netherlands pensioners had received too much Australian pension because they did not tell Centrelink of increases in their income. The debts have not arisen due to Centrelink computer systems.

Customers are required to inform Centrelink of increases to their overseas pension income and any other types of income or assets or risk being overpaid Australian Age Pension.

(2) No, this is not the case, only a small number of debts exceed $5,000.

(3) For cases where the debt is affirmed Centrelink will undertake normal recovery options. This can be either by withholdings from pension, third party withholdings or cash instalments. In some cases, it is possible civil recovery proceedings might be commenced but only if the customer refuses to enter into a reasonable arrangement to pay their account, or had an agreed arrangement that they did not keep.

(4) The Minister is not aware of particular cases where customer information was not applied.

(5) Centrelink has commenced a pilot to test datamatching between Australia and the Netherlands. The pilot will assess the cost-effectiveness of identifying Centrelink customers receiving undeclared or under-declared age pension from the Netherlands and vice versa.

The pilot is being conducted in accordance with The Agreement on Social Security between Australia and The Netherlands.

The Federal Privacy Commissioner’s Office has been informed of the match and has not raised any objections to it proceeding. The data-match is being conducted in accordance with the Privacy Commissioner’s ‘Guidelines for the use of data matching in Commonwealth administration’.

Centrelink has gathered general information from a number of Social Security Agreement partner countries to allow cost of living increases in pensions paid by those countries to be replicated on the records of Centrelink customers. It is hoped this service can be expanded to some other Agreement partner countries.

**Women: Trauma Services Funding**

(Question No. 1935)

Mrs Crosio asked the Prime Minister, upon notice, on 26 May 2003:

Can he indicate the level of federal funding for women’s trauma services in 2003-04, and provide comparisons with previous levels of federal funding over the last three financial years.

Mr Howard—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

I am advised by my department as follows:

Under the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) funding is provided for services with a primary target group that is women escaping domestic violence. In 2001-02 there were 289 SAAP services nationally which had as their primary target women escaping domestic violence, up from 283 in 2000-01. SAAP also funds services with a range of other primary target groups. Women escaping domestic violence also have access to support services that have other primary targets, such as youth.

Total annual SAAP expenditure levels are not known until the end of each financial year.

Provisional expenditure figure for 2002-03 is $79,955,000.

The three previous year’s expenditure is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1999-2000</td>
<td>$65,762,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000-2001</td>
<td>$73,373,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001-2002</td>
<td>$76,928,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These figures represent total joint Commonwealth and State funding. The average overall proportion of funding across the whole of SAAP is Commonwealth 56% and State/Territories 44%.

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
In addition, FaCS funds 8 Specialised Family Violence Services, one in each capital city (with two organisations working in partnership in NSW). These services focus on prevention and early intervention through a whole of family approach.

The Specialised Family Violence Services provide a range of services including: counselling; group work; access to other Family Relationships Services Program funded activities such as Family Relationships Mediation, Family Relationships Education, Family Relationships Skills Training, Adolescent Mediation and Family Therapy and Children’s Contact Services; and access or referrals to other community and government programs such as Financial Counselling and Emergency Relief. The recent and projected expenditure under this programme is shown below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Allocated funding (GST exclusive)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2001-02</td>
<td>$800 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002-03</td>
<td>$818 400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003-04</td>
<td>$837 223</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Commonwealth also funds the Program of Assistance for Survivors of Torture and Trauma (PASTT) which provides counselling, advocacy and referral services to both men and women who have experienced torture and trauma prior to their arrival in Australia. The recent and projected expenditure under this programme is:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Funding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2001-02</td>
<td>$1.473 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002-03</td>
<td>$1.539 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003-04</td>
<td>$1.576 million</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Education: Undergraduate University Study

(Question No. 1936)

Mrs Crosio asked the Minister for Education, Science and Training, upon notice, on 26 May 2003:

1. How many students residing in the electorate of Prospect undertook undergraduate university study in 2002-03.
2. What number, or percentage, of these students undertook study in (a) law, (b) medicine, (c) veterinary science, (d) economics, (e) accounting, (f) engineering, (g) teaching, and (h) nursing in 2002-03.
3. Of the overall number of students, what percentage undertook study at the University of Western Sydney in 2002-03.
4. What percentage of undergraduate students in Prospect paid (a) upfront HECS fees, or (b) full fees in 2002-03.
5. How much money has been allocated from the 2003-04 Budget for apprenticeship schemes in the electorate of Prospect.

Dr Nelson—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

Final university student data for 2003 will not be available until 2004. Figures have been provided on the basis of final 2002 data.

Information on university students is only available by postcode, not by electoral boundaries. As nine (out of ten) postcode areas in the electorate of Prospect also cover suburbs that are outside the electorate, it is not possible to provide data on university students residing only in that electorate. Therefore, the data provided does not represent an exact analysis of the actual numbers of students residing within the electoral boundaries of Prospect.
(1) There were 8,443 students residing at postcodes in the electorate of Prospect who undertook undergraduate university study in 2002.

(2) Of these undergraduate students, the numbers undertaking study in the nominated disciplines in 2002 are detailed below, with the percentage of the total of 8,443 for each group indicated in brackets:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discipline</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>law</td>
<td>461</td>
<td>5.5 per cent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>medicine</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>0.7 per cent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>veterinary science</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0.1 per cent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>economics</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>2.1 per cent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>accounting</td>
<td>569</td>
<td>6.7 per cent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>engineering</td>
<td>815</td>
<td>9.7 per cent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>teaching</td>
<td>813</td>
<td>9.6 per cent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nursing</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>3.8 per cent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(3) Of the total number of students, 44.0 per cent, or 3,715 students, undertook study at the University of Western Sydney in 2002.

(4) (a) The 1,899 undergraduate students residing at postcodes in the electorate of Prospect who paid full upfront HECS in 2002 represented 22.5 per cent of the total number of students.

(b) The 82 domestic undergraduate students residing at postcodes in the electorate of Prospect who paid full fees in 2002 represented 1.0 per cent of the total number of students. The 338 undergraduate overseas students residing at postcodes in the electorate of Prospect who paid full fees in 2002 represented 4.0 per cent.

(5) The 2003-04 Budget has allocated $533.5 million for New Apprenticeships incentives and personal benefits. The New Apprenticeships Program is demand driven and notional incentive allocations are not made by electorate. However, based upon the level of incentives payments made during 2002-03 to employers in the Prospect electorate, an estimate of $6.5 million can be made in relation to 2003-04.

Prospect Electorate: Disability Employment

(Question No. 1937)

Mrs Crosio asked the Minister representing the Minister for Family and Community Services, upon notice, on 26 May 2003:

(1) In respect of disability employment, how many business services in the electorate of Prospect provide employment opportunities for people with disabilities.

(2) How many people with disabilities are employed by these business services.

(3) Have the number of these business services increased or decreased over the last financial year.

Mr Anthony—The Minister for Family and Community Services has provided the following answer to the honourable member’s question:

(1) There is one business service in the electorate of Prospect. This service is Working Options.

(2) FaCS funds Working Options to provide employment assistance to 54 people with disabilities.

(3) There has been no increase or decrease in the number of services in Prospect over the last financial year.
**Australian Broadcasting Corporation: Funding**

(Question No. 1946)

Mr Murphy asked the Minister representing the Minister for Communications, Information Technology and the Arts, upon notice, on 28 May 2003:

1. Did he read an article titled “Aunty Budget Blues” by Errol Simper on pages 4 and 5 of the media section of The Australian dated 22 May 2003.

2. Will he rule out offering the ABC increased funding conditional upon the Senate’s support for his Broadcasting Services Amendment (Media Ownership) Bill 2002; if not, why not.

Mr McGauran—The Minister for Communications, Information Technology and the Arts has provided the following answer to the honourable member’s question:

1. Yes.

2. The Broadcasting Services Amendment (Media Ownership) Bill 2002 reforms the antiquated framework governing foreign and cross-media ownership of media assets. Repealing the current regime does not have any direct impact on the ABC. Additional funding for the ABC is therefore not contemplated by the Bill.

**Communications: Special Broadcasting Service**

(Question No. 1951)

Mr Danby asked the Minister representing the Minister for Communications, Information Technology and the Arts, upon notice, on 28 May 2003:

1. How often is the number of SBS radio programs for ethnic groups re-evaluated.

2. When was the last change in these schedules and who makes these changes.

3. In respect of these changes, (a) is it relevant that some communities have other foreign language media, such as community radio and newspapers, (b) is protection of the language a relevant factor, (c) is religion as well as language considered; if so, is the Minister aware that (i) sociologists consistently report that the census significantly underestimates the number of Jews in the population because many Jews consider Judaism a nationality rather than a religion, and (ii) many Jews do not want to be identified as Jewish because of their experiences during World War II, and (d) is this taken into account when making programming decisions.

4. How many (a) Hebrew, (b) Yiddish, (c) English language Jewish community programs has SBS radio had for the past 10 years.

5. Can the Minister confirm that Jewish community programs have been recently cut; if so, why were these cuts made.

6. What was the old program schedule, what is the new program schedule and what is now scheduled for Friday at 3 p.m.

7. Is the Minister aware that (a) the Jewish Sabbath starts at sun-down on Friday, (b) the Friday 3 p.m. program is the most useful for the community, and (c) the Friday program has a higher number of listeners than the Wednesday 3 p.m. program; if so, why was the Friday 3 p.m. program cut instead of a different program.

8. What communities have had increased programming.

9. Can the Minister confirm that the most recent census figures indicate that the number of Yiddish speakers decreased by 169 or around 13%; if so, why did Yiddish programs lose 33.3% air time.
(10) Is it relevant that (a) there are no other Yiddish media outlets; if so, (i) was this considered and (ii) what were the deliberations; if not, why not, and (b) Yiddish is an endangered language and should be protected; if so, (iii) was this considered and (iv) what were the deliberations; if not, why not.

(11) Is the Minister aware that the processing of answers to question 15 on the 2001 Census about languages other than English (LOTE) presents a problem in relation to Yiddish speakers because (a) only one language listed as “other” is counted and speakers of “stateless” languages, such as Yiddish, have always had to be at least bi-lingual, and (b) it asks about languages spoken at home and Yiddish is predominantly an older person’s language, so while it may not be spoken at “home” with the family, it could well be the individual’s preferred language when speaking to contemporaries; if so, were these factors considered in determining the new SBS Radio scheduling arrangements.

(12) Can the Minister confirm that the most recent census figures indicate that the number of Hebrew speakers increased slightly; if so, why did Hebrew programs lose 33.3% air time.

(13) Is it relevant that there are no other Hebrew media outlets; if so, (a) was this considered and (b) what were the deliberations; if not, why not.

(14) Will the Minister provide a breakdown of the sources of revenue received by SBS radio.

(15) Are there paid advertisements or sponsorships from government agencies, such as Centrelink, the Australian Taxation Office, or the Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs; if so, (a) which Government agencies have contracts with SBS, (b) what is the sponsorship/advertising arrangement, (c) in which programs do they advertise; and (d) how much do advertisements cost in each language/community program.

(16) Are different amounts charged to advertise in different language/community programs; if so, (a) why, and (b) is this considered in making programming decisions; if so, is this a breach of SBS’s non-commercial public function.

(17) From whom do the Jewish community programs receive advertising/sponsorship and is this considered in programming decisions and how much do they receive.

(18) From whom does the community/language program which is scheduled to replace the program on Friday at 3 p.m. receive advertising/sponsorship and how much does it receive.

Mr McGauran—The Minister for Communications, Information Technology and the Arts has provided the following answer to the honourable member’s question:

(1) SBS advises that the allocation of SBS Radio program hours to language communities is re-evaluated periodically either following a Census or at times of changes to total broadcast hours.

(2) SBS advises that the schedules were last changed in 1993 at the expansion of services to second frequencies in Sydney and Melbourne and the addition of the National Radio Network. The review was undertaken by SBS Radio, with the Head of Radio making recommendations through the SBS Executive to the Board for approval.

(3) SBS advises that:

(a) For reasons of equity, the availability of other media cannot be a primary determinant in allocating airtime. This matter was raised and discussed at various community consultations around Australia (see 10 (a) below). No newspaper, community radio station or commercial language broadcaster serves the same purposes in the same way as SBS Radio, in providing core news and information services to people who speak a language other than English (LOTE).

(b) Because of resource limitations and the economic realities of public broadcasting, SBS Radio has been forced to focus increasingly on serving the socio-economic needs of LOTE speakers,
especially in the provision of news and information services. The maintenance of cultures and language perforce take a lesser priority.

(c) and (d) SBS Radio is a language-based broadcaster and does not broadcast to religious or ethno-religious communities per se.

(4) (a) to (c) SBS advises that, since 1993, SBS Radio has had three weekly programs in Hebrew and three in Yiddish. There have been no specifically English language Jewish community programs, though both the Hebrew and Yiddish language programs have included segments in English to assist in cross-listening, especially for younger listeners who may not be fluent in either language.

(5) SBS advises that no Jewish community programs have been cut, as none exist. However, there has been a reduction of one hour each per week for the Hebrew and Yiddish language programs. The reductions in hours were made (a) to allow the introduction of language programs for needy new and emerging communities such as Somali, Malay, Amharic and Nepalese and (b) to correct significant inequities viz. other language communities.

(6) The old program schedules were:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Hebrew</th>
<th>Yiddish</th>
<th>Hebrew</th>
<th>Yiddish</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2pm</td>
<td>2pm</td>
<td>2pm (incl NRN)</td>
<td>2pm (incl NRN)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>3pm</td>
<td>3pm (incl NRN)</td>
<td>3pm (incl NRN)</td>
<td>12pm (incl NRN)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The new program schedules are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Hebrew</th>
<th>Yiddish</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>2pm</td>
<td>2pm (incl NRN)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td>11am (incl NRN)</td>
<td>12pm (incl NRN)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CANTONESE (POPULATION 225,307) IS NOW SCHEDULED AT 2PM ON FRIDAYS AND Norwegian at 3pm. The weekly Norwegian program (serving 2,858 speakers with only one hour per week) has been moved from its former Monday morning spot to make way for the Mandarin language program (pop.139,286).

(7) (a) Yes.

(b) SBS advises that the community expressed no preference for losing any programs. Of the three scheduled weekly programs (Wednesday, Friday and Sunday), relevant SBS Radio program staff said the Friday program would be the best to discontinue in that it allowed coverage by the two remaining programs to be spread more evenly over the week. SBS Radio endorsed this view. Had either the Wednesday or Sunday programs been discontinued there would have been a 5:2 day period between the remaining programs, which would not best serve the interests of Hebrew or Yiddish listeners.

(c) SBS advises that there are no audience figures to show which program is most popular.

(8) SBS advises that, as well as the new and emerging communities that have been added to the SBS Radio schedules (Somali, Malay, Amharic and Nepalese), language communities that were previously most seriously under-represented and have now received an additional hour on both Sydney and Melbourne networks are: Cantonese, Mandarin, Hindi and Filipino. Arabic has received an additional hour in Melbourne only.

(9) Matters relating to the 2001 Census are the responsibility of the Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasurer. SBS advises that, as SBS Radio has a finite number of airtime hours to allocate, it does so proportionately across language communities, so percentage decreases or increases within language communities are not in themselves the deciding factor. More significant is the fact that much larger language communities such as Thai (17,344) and Tongan (10,587) had fewer than
three hours each per week. Yiddish is the ninth smallest language on SBS Radio's schedules, yet even with two hours per week it has a greater allocation than 33 other languages.

(10) SBS advises that:

(a) during SBS Radio's nationwide consultation, it was agreed at mass meetings of community representatives in all state and territory capitals that the factor of other language media should not be added to the existing five criteria for calculating need, which are language community size, lack of fluency in English, recency of arrival, age over 55 and unemployment rates. It was generally felt by representatives that fairness and equity would not be served by either including or excluding communities because of the availability of other media in their language. One such view was that small and needy communities should not be penalised where they had managed by their own efforts to produce a newsletter or a community radio program. Also, as explained in 3a. above, SBS Radio plays a different role than other media.

(b) as explained in part 3 (a) above, SBS Radio's primary function in 2003 with finite resources is to serve the socio-economic needs of Australians who speak a language other than English. It has never been SBS Radio's role to protect endangered languages as an aim in itself. There are many languages in danger of extinction - especially Aboriginal languages - that SBS Radio is similarly unable to protect.

(11) (a) The Minister has received no correspondence on this matter. SBS advises that SBS was fully aware of the arguments of alleged under-reporting of many languages, including Yiddish. In fact, most language communities can advance plausible reasons why their particular language was under-reported. Yiddish is by no means alone in seeing itself as a 'stateless' or minority language; others which have been at some stage in their history include Macedonian, Aboriginal, Tamil, Assyrian, Armenian, Bosnian, Maori, Gujarati, Slovenian, Kurdish, Irish Gaelic, Scottish Gaelic and Welsh. Question 15 of the Census gave individuals the choice of nominating which is their first language other than English. In allocating airtime, SBS must rely on the choices individuals make as to which language other than English they nominated.

(b) SBS advises that the 2001 Census was able to identify and count individuals who said they spoke one language within a household which spoke another or other languages. If an individual could speak only Yiddish or mainly Yiddish, it is reasonable to assume that in most cases they were identified as Yiddish speakers. This too happens across all language communities.

(12) Matters relating to the 2001 Census are the responsibility of the Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasurer. As explained by SBS in part (9) above, airtime is allocated not on population changes within language communities, but comparative populations in the 2001 Census. While the number of Hebrew speakers increased by 35 between 1996 and 2001, the total population of the communities broadcast on SBS Radio increased by 209,000.

(13) As explained in part (10a) above, the availability of other media was not a primary consideration in the allocation of airtime to the Hebrew speaking community.

(14) SBS Radio revenue comprises $32.755m from appropriations and $1.362m from Radio Advertising.

(15) SBS advises that:

(a) Government agencies do use SBS Radio to communicate with people from non-English speaking backgrounds. Universal McCaan, the Federal Government's master media agency, has negotiated a Federal Government rate card. The rate card is extended to all Federal Government agencies. In addition, SBS Radio has a contract with Centrelink, which was won by tender to produce community information segments to be aired on SBS as free community
service announcements. The payment which SBS Radio receives is for the production component of $500 plus GST per language.

(b) Advertising is bought in spots of 30, 45 or 60 seconds.

(c) Federal Government agencies have advertised in the following languages on SBS Radio: Aboriginal, Arabic, Albanian, Assyrian, Bosnian, Cantonese, Croatian, Czech, Dari, Pashto, Dutch, Estonian, Filipino, German, Greek, Italian, Khmer, Korean, Kurdish, Latvian, Lithuanian, Macedonian, Maltese, Mandarin, Persian/Farsi, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Russian, Samoan, Serbian, Slovak, Slovenian, Spanish, Turkish, Ukrainian, Vietnamese. Advertisements in Amharic, Somali and Tigrinya have been broadcast in the African Hour.

(d) Advertising rates, as per the Federal Government rate card for national spots are: 30 seconds - $126 plus GST per spot; 45 seconds - $185 plus GST per spot; 60 seconds - $220 plus GST per spot. These rates are uniform across language programs.

(16) No.

(17) SBS advises there has been no paid advertising for the Hebrew or Yiddish language programs in the current financial year. SBS Radio Advertising Guidelines (21 August 1997) “...affirm the need to maintain a clear distinction between its advertising and sponsorship activities and the editorial independence of its programming” (page 3).

(18) SBS advises that the Friday 3pm slot will be filled by moving the Norwegian language program. During this financial year, the program has not received advertising.

Saudi Arabia: Terrorist Attacks
(Question Nos 1952, 1953 and 1954)

Mr Danby asked the Prime Minister, the Minister for Trade and the Minister for Foreign Affairs, upon notice, on 28 May 2003:

(1) Can he confirm whether the Government has (a) evaluated and (b) agrees with the US government’s claim that an al-Qaeda cell based in Iran was responsible for the 12 May terrorist attacks in Saudi Arabia, in which 34 people were killed, including one Australian.

(2) Can he further confirm the accuracy of US Secretary of Defense’s condemnation of the authorities in Tehran harboring this al-Qaeda leadership cell responsible for the recent murder of civilians in Saudi Arabia and Morocco.

(3) What statements, diplomatic approaches or actions has the Government made or will the Government make to inform the regime in control of the Islamic Republic of Iran that harbouring al-Qaeda leadership is inconsistent with the membership of the community of nations.

Mr Downer—On behalf of the Prime Minister, the Minister for Trade and myself, the answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) The Government is well aware that the United States and other countries have concerns that al-Qaeda personnel in Iran may have had knowledge of the Riyadh attacks before they took place. Australia and other members of the international community remain concerned about a possible al-Qaeda presence in Iran.

(2) We are aware of statements by the US Secretary of Defense and other senior US officials criticising Iran in relation to al-Qaeda.

(3) As I informed the House on 28 May, during my visit to Iran on 25 May I made the point to all those I met, including the President, that Iran should not underestimate the commitment of the broader international community to destroy al-Qaeda. I reminded the Iranians that Australians had been killed in terrorist attacks in the United States (September 2001), in Bali (October 2002) and in
Riyadh (May 2003). I said that it would be a matter of profound concern to Australia, the United States and others if Iran did not take decisive action against an al-Qaeda presence there. Very soon after I left Iran, the Iranian Government arrested a number of al-Qaeda members. The Government will continue to monitor the effectiveness of Iran’s response to al-Qaeda.

Hunter Electorate: Benefits

(Question No. 1956)

Mr Fitzgibbon asked the Minister representing the Minister for Family and Community Services, upon notice, on 28 May 2003:

1. How many people in the electoral division of Hunter, in total and for each postcode, are recipients of the (a) Aged Pension, (b) Disability Support Pension, (c) Carer Allowance, (d) Newstart Allowance, (e) Youth Allowance, (f) Parenting Payment Single, (g) Parenting Payment Partnered, (h) Family Tax Benefit A, (i) Family Tax Benefit B, (j) Childcare Benefit, and (k) Rent Assistance.

2. How many people in the electoral division of Hunter are receiving income assistance as a total population of the electoral division of Hunter.

3. In (a) Australia and (b) the electoral division of Hunter, how many recipients of Family Tax Benefit A received a debt notice in (i) 2000-2001 and (ii) 2001-2002.

4. In (a) Australia and (b) the electoral division of Hunter, how many recipients of Family Tax Benefit B received a debt notice in (i) 2000-2001 and (ii) 2001-2002.

5. What was the average Family Tax Benefit debt per family or individual in the electoral division of Hunter in (a) 2000-2001 and (b) 2001-2002.

6. How many families or individuals received a Family Tax Benefit debt notice despite having informed Centrelink within 14 days of a change in their circumstances.

7. How many families with a Family Tax Benefit debt had part or all of their tax returns withheld to satisfy the debt in (a) 2000-2001 and (b) 2001-2002.

Mr Anthony—The Minister for Family and Community Services has provided the following answer to the honourable member’s question:

1. Current customers by specific payment and component types.
## Electorate of Hunter – as at 2 May 2003

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Home Postcode</th>
<th>(a) Age</th>
<th>(b) Disability Support Pension</th>
<th>(c) Carer Allowance</th>
<th>(d) Newstart Allowance</th>
<th>(e) Youth Allowance</th>
<th>(f) Parenting Payment (Single)</th>
<th>(g) Parenting Payment (Partnered)</th>
<th>(h) Family Tax Benefit (A)</th>
<th>(i) Family Tax Benefit (B)</th>
<th>(j) Child Care Benefit (Formal)</th>
<th>(k) Rent Assistance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2320</td>
<td>2178</td>
<td>1073</td>
<td>414</td>
<td>665</td>
<td>378</td>
<td>594</td>
<td>199</td>
<td>1957</td>
<td>1424</td>
<td>822</td>
<td>1103</td>
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<tr>
<td>2321</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>54</td>
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<td>222</td>
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<td>595</td>
<td>443</td>
<td>543</td>
<td>165</td>
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<td>1361</td>
<td>712</td>
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<td>41</td>
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<td>38</td>
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<td>96</td>
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<td>20</td>
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<td>3490</td>
<td>1076</td>
<td>11334</td>
<td>8601</td>
<td>3984</td>
<td>5770</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
(2) Current customers by specific payment and component types.

Electorate of Hunter – as at 2 May 2003

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Home Postcode</th>
<th>Income Assistance</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2320</td>
<td>6 743</td>
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<tr>
<td>2323</td>
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<td>2326</td>
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<td>2327</td>
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<tr>
<td>2328</td>
<td>522</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2330</td>
<td>4 041</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2333</td>
<td>3 195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2334</td>
<td>747</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2335</td>
<td>926</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OTHER</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>37 826</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Income Assistance is defined as Income Support and/or FTB. Counts for electorate may be undercounted by up to 10%. Figures represented with <20 are confidential and are not provided to protect the customer’s privacy. Counts under 20 in individual cells have been excluded from totals.

The total number of people receiving income assistance is (37 826) and as a percentage of the total population the electorate of Hunter (122 685) is 31%.

(3) National information provided as at 28 March 2003. Electoral information provided as at 27 December 2002. Please note that debts of Family Tax Benefit A and B cannot be reported separately.

(a) (i) For 2000-2001, 728 458 customers Australia wide incurred a Family Tax Benefit reconciliation debt. Recovery of 519 904 of these debts would have been waived under small debt and transitional waiver provisions.

(a) (ii) For 2000-2001, 4 320 customers in the electorate of Hunter incurred a Family Tax Benefit reconciliation debt. Recovery of 3 307 of these debts would have been waived under small debt and transitional waiver provisions.

(b) (i) For 2001-2002, 542 940 customers Australia wide incurred a Family Tax Benefit reconciliation debt. Recovery of 73 476 of these debts would have been waived under small debt provisions.

(b) (ii) For 2001-2002, 3 179 customers in the electorate of Hunter incurred a Family Tax Benefit reconciliation debt. The number of debts which would have been waived under small debt provisions is unavailable at this time.

(4) Please note that debts of Family Tax Benefit A and B cannot be reported separately. Refer question (3).

(5) (i) For 2000-2001, the average Family Tax Benefit debt amount for the electorate of Hunter was $760.37.

(ii) For 2001-2002, the average Family Tax Benefit debt amount for the electorate of Hunter was $670.73.

(6) This information is not recorded.
(7) According to information provided to Centrelink by the Australian Tax Office (which is not separated into financial years), the number of families with a Family Tax Benefit debt that have had part or all of their tax return withheld to satisfy the debt as of 2 May 2003 was 219,581.

**Defence: Commercial Support Program**

(Question No. 1957)

*Mrs Crosio* asked the Minister representing the Minister for Defence, upon notice, on 28 May 2003:

1. Will the Minister provide details of the types of tasks and operations that have been outsourced to the private sector by the Department of Defence since 1996.
2. If any involve highly sensitive activities, what measures has the Department taken to ensure that national security is not compromised.
3. Will the Minister list the companies that have been successful in obtaining contracts since 1996.

*Mrs Vale*—The Minister for Defence has provided the following answer to the honourable member’s question:

1. The following table lists the Commercial Support Program (CSP) activity names, functions, prime contractors and the dates the contracts were signed.

CSP Activities Contracted Out Since 1996

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACTIVITY NAME</th>
<th>FUNCTION</th>
<th>PRIME CONTRACTOR (Correct at time of Decision Announcement)</th>
<th>CONTRACT LET DATE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Base Support Services 305 Air Base Wing East Sale</td>
<td>Base Support</td>
<td>SERCo/Gardiner Merchant</td>
<td>31/01/96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Navy Communications Station – Canberra Maintenance</td>
<td>Maintenance of Equipment</td>
<td>Rockwell Australia</td>
<td>23/02/96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HMAS Cerberus Base Support Services</td>
<td>Base Support</td>
<td>SERCo</td>
<td>29/02/96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RAN Armament Depot Somerton Guarding &amp; Other Services</td>
<td>Base Support</td>
<td>Probe Australia</td>
<td>14/04/96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stores and Office Requisites, Australian Capital Territory</td>
<td>Stores Management</td>
<td>Pederson Contact</td>
<td>31/07/96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Base Support Services 306 Air Base Wing Pearce</td>
<td>Base Support</td>
<td>SERCo/Gardiner Merchant</td>
<td>31/08/96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic Services 302 Air Base Wing Williamtown</td>
<td>Base Support</td>
<td>SERCo</td>
<td>1/10/96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defence Establishment Orchard Hills and Royal Australian Navy Ammunition Depot Guarding Services</td>
<td>Guarding Services</td>
<td>ACS Group</td>
<td>30/01/97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BASC Liverpool – Base Support</td>
<td>Base Support</td>
<td>Australian Operation Support Services</td>
<td>31/03/97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Navy Port Services/Support Craft</td>
<td>Port and Minor Vessel Services</td>
<td>Defence Maritime Services</td>
<td>1/07/97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hunter Valley Logistics Battalion - Base Support Functions</td>
<td>Base Support</td>
<td>Transfield Pty Ltd</td>
<td>30/08/97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACTIVITY NAME</td>
<td>FUNCTION</td>
<td>PRIME CONTRACTOR</td>
<td>CONTRACT LET DATE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Albury/Wodonga Military Area Logistics and Base Support Functions</td>
<td>Base Support and Equipment Maintenance</td>
<td>Transfield Defence Systems Pty Ltd</td>
<td>31/08/97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Base Support Services RAAF Telecommunications Support Unit Glenbrook</td>
<td>Base Support</td>
<td>Spotless</td>
<td>1/09/97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richmond Corrosion Control Facility</td>
<td>Paint Shop Work</td>
<td>Australia and New Zealand Engineering Services</td>
<td>1/02/98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Base Support Services 302 Air Base Wing Williamtown</td>
<td>Base Support</td>
<td>SERCo/Gardiner Merchant</td>
<td>15/03/98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garrison Support - South Queensland</td>
<td>Base Support</td>
<td>SERCo/Gardiner Merchant</td>
<td>9/09/98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garrison Support - North Queensland</td>
<td>Base Support</td>
<td>SERCo/Gardiner Merchant</td>
<td>1/12/98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aircraft Research and Development Unit Reform Project - Airborne Test and Transport Support</td>
<td>Aircraft Test Support Services</td>
<td>Australian Flight Test Services</td>
<td>31/03/99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garrison Support – Northern Territory/Kimberley</td>
<td>Base Support</td>
<td>SERCo/Gardiner Merchant</td>
<td>1/05/99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garrison Support - Western Australia</td>
<td>Base Support</td>
<td>Transfield Pty Ltd</td>
<td>1/05/99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garrison Support – Australian Capital Territory</td>
<td>Base Support</td>
<td>Eurest (Australia) Support Services Pty Ltd</td>
<td>1/06/99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garrison Support - Central Sydney</td>
<td>Base Support</td>
<td>SERCo/Gardiner Merchant</td>
<td>22/07/99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garrison Support - Southern Victoria</td>
<td>Base Support</td>
<td>Transfield Pty Ltd</td>
<td>17/09/99</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aircraft Research and Development Unit Reform Project - Maintenance Services</td>
<td>Maintenance Support</td>
<td>Raytheon Systems</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class 8 Medical and Dental Supply Chain Management</td>
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<td>SERCo-Gardiner Merchant</td>
<td>30/11/99</td>
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<td>Garrison Support - South Australia</td>
<td>Base Support</td>
<td>Transfield Pty Ltd</td>
<td>28/01/00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>501 Wing (RAAF Amberley) - F111 Workshop</td>
<td>Aircraft Maintenance</td>
<td>Australia and New Zealand Engineering Services</td>
<td>20/03/00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garrison Support - Western Sydney</td>
<td>Base Support</td>
<td>SERCo</td>
<td>27/03/00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garrison Support - South Coast of New South Wales</td>
<td>Base Support</td>
<td>SERCo</td>
<td>28/03/00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>503 WG C130 Deeper Maintenance</td>
<td>Aircraft Maintenance</td>
<td>Qantas</td>
<td>24/05/00</td>
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<tr>
<td>ADF Recruiting - Trial Project</td>
<td>Recruitment</td>
<td>Manpower Services Australia Pty Ltd</td>
<td>4/09/00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Re-testing of Facilities and Property Operations - DSTO Melbourne</td>
<td>Building Maintenance</td>
<td>SSL Asset Services</td>
<td>25/09/00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
(2) There are no highly sensitive CSP activities outsourced to private companies.
(3) See response to part (1) above.

**Australian Defence Force: Staffing**

*(Question No. 1958)*

**Mrs Crosio** asked the Minister Assisting the Minister for Defence, upon notice, on 28 May 2003:

(1) What strategies has the Government established to increase the level of recruitment into the Australian Defence Force.

(2) Can the Minister detail the numbers employed in (a) the Air Force, (b) the Army, and (c) the Navy, in each financial year since 1996.

(3) Is the Government planning to educate employers of the benefits of allowing employees to undertake Army Reserve training.

**Mrs Vale**—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) Defence is currently staffing several new initiatives to enhance recruiting. A tertiary recruitment strategy has been developed and commenced in March 2003. This strategy is to target university students for direct, graduate and under graduate officer entry. The program aims to fill all officer entry avenues, other than the Australian Defence Force Academy. Results from pilot programs in universities have been extremely good with a significant increase in eligible inquiries.

The recruitment out sourcing trial with Manpower Services (Australia) has successfully concluded and resulted in a collaborative arrangement between Manpower and the Australian Defence Force (ADF) to provide a national recruiting service. The collaborative organisation, to be known as Defence Force Recruiting, will commence national operations on 1 July 2003 for a 4 year period.

Defence is also working extensively on improving the current Defence website to include e-recruitment opportunities for candidates. The applicants or candidates will have access to an individualised portal called MY HQ, which allows them to investigate the career opportunities within the three Services and to receive information from Defence.

(2) Defence staffing levels are published in Defence Annual Reports.
(3) The Government has established the Defence Reserves Support Council to enhance the availability of the Reserves Component of the ADF by promoting the benefits of Reserve service to, and by establishing a flexible partnership with, the community in general and employers in particular. The Council, with assistance from the ADF, actively informs employers about the benefits of employing reservists and allowing them to undertake reserve training. The Council also undertakes an active Employer Support Program for the Reserves. The program includes visits by employers to major exercises, addresses by Council members and senior Defence personnel to employer groups and organisations, the publication of brochures, and preparation of articles for newspapers and professional journals. Defence Reserves Support Council staff also attend appropriate major industry conventions and public activities to distribute employer support information and promote the benefits of Reserve service.

Iraq

(Question No. 1960)

Mr Bevis asked the Minister representing the Minister for Defence, upon notice, on 28 May 2003:

Has the Australian Defence Force taken possession of (a) an Iraqi air force plane or (b) any other item/s of military hardware; if so, (i) what was the basis on which Australia took possession of those items, (ii) who owns those items, (iii) on what basis was that ownership determined, (iv) on whose authority were the items acquired, and (v) on whose authority were the items removed from Iraq.

Mrs Vale—The Minister for Defence has provided the following answer to the honourable member’s question:

(a) The Australian Defence Force (ADF) did take possession of a non-operational 30 year-old Iraqi jet fighter aircraft. The aircraft was taken to a staging base in the Middle East in preparation for return to Australia. Subsequently, it was decided not to proceed with importation and the aircraft will be returned to Iraq. Decisions were made under proper command authority.

(b) The ADF has appropriated a range of other military hardware from Iraq and intends to bring these items back to Australia for training and technical exploitation.

(i) (ii) and (iii) The advice of Defence is that under international law, enemy weapons captured during combat may be appropriated. All items appropriated by ADF troops were captured during combat operations in Iraq. The items are, therefore, regarded as property of the Government of Australia.

(ii) The items were acquired under proper command authority.

(v) The items were removed from Iraq under proper command authority. The ADF also appropriated some minor items of military hardware, which it intends to return to Australia for display purposes.

Immigration: Asylum Seekers

(Question No. 1962)

Mr Organ asked the Minister for Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs, upon notice, on 28 May 2003:

(1) In respect of the suicide of the Afghani asylum seeker Dr Habib Vahedi who died in Murray Bridge, SA, on 3 February 2003, was there evidence available to him, the Government or the Port Hedland detention centre management that Dr Vahedi had psychological problems.

(2) In respect of his statement reported in the Advertiser on 8 February 2003, (a) what did he mean when he said Dr Vahedi’s suicide could well be for a whole host of reasons and that people should
have got him “appropriate support and counselling”, and (b) which people were responsible for providing what counselling.

(3) What information does he have to show that he or his Department knew nothing of Dr Vahedi’s potential to commit suicide before or since 8 February 2003.

(4) What medical or social support services were afforded to Dr Vahedi in South Australia.

Mr Ruddock—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) Upon arrival in detention, a standard risk needs assessment was conducted in relation to Mr Wahedy. Mr Wahedy was identified as not being at risk of self-harm.

On 28 November 1999, a refugee action group recorded that, in their opinion, Mr Wahedy was in need of assistance as he was feeling traumatised, was not sleeping and was worried for his family. The Registered Nurse employed by the detention service provider noted these comments and advised on 29 November 1999 that there was no evidence of this at his initial interview at the centre with nursing staff, nor on any subsequent visits.

During his time in detention there was no evidence that Mr Wahedy was suffering from psychological problems, despite ongoing contact with medical staff.

Privacy and confidentiality restrictions prevent the Department from being provided with information on whether Mr Wahedy accessed medical or psychological treatment or counselling while in the community. This includes any use of the services of the Association of Services to Torture and Trauma Survivors (ASeTTS).

(2) The circumstances of Mr Wahedy’s death are currently being investigated by the State Coroner’s office. It is inappropriate to draw conclusions as to the reasons for his death in advance of the formal coroinal process which is examining these issues.

As a temporary protection visa holder lawfully in Australia, Mr Wahedy had access to those mainstream medical and psychological support services available to all Australian nationals, including access to Medicare. The Government has no obligation to provide support and counselling services beyond the level available to Australians.

However, as with all TPV holders, on release from detention, Mr Wahedy was provided with an information package that included detailed information on how to access specialised counselling from the Association of Services to Torture and Trauma Survivors (ASeTTS) or access any other health services, should he wish.

Individuals who feel they are in need of medical or psychological support services should themselves seek assistance. If other people with whom Mr Wahedy associated in the community believed that he was in need of such assistance they would have been in a position to encourage his use of the relevant services, or to draw the attention of the appropriate professionals to his situation.

(3) See answer to part (1).

(4) See answer to parts (1) and (2).

**Health: Salvinorin A**

(Question No. 1963)

Mr Tanner asked the Minister representing the Minister for Health and Ageing, upon notice, on 29 May 2003:

(1) In respect of the prohibition of Salvinorin A by the National Drugs and Poisons Schedule Committee, under what full name was the substance first prohibited.

(2) Was this name later corrected; if so, in what way.
(3) What was the original source of the incorrect name given for that substance.
(4) Is that source the subject of any prohibition or classification under the guidelines of the Office of Film and Literature Classification.
(5) Is the government now certain that the full correct name of the substance is correct.

Mr Andrews—The Minister for Health and Ageing has provided the following answer to the honourable member’s question:

(1) The full chemical name for Salvinorin A initially adopted by the National Drugs and Poisons Schedule Committee (NDPSC) and included in Schedule 9 of the Standard for Uniform Scheduling of Drugs and Poisons (SUSDP) was 8-METHOXYCARBONYL-4A,8A-DIMETHYL-6-ACETOXY-5-KETO-3,4,4B,7,9,10,10A-SEPTAHYDRO-3-(4-FURANYL)-2,1-NAPHTHO[4,3-E]PYRONE.

(2) The NDPSC subsequently corrected the chemical name for Salvinorin A in Schedule 9 of the SUSDP to METHYL (2S, 4aR, 6aR, 7R, 9S, 10aS, 10bR) 9-ACETOXY-6a,10b-DIMETHYL-4,10-DIOXO-DODECAHYDRO-2-(3-FURYL)-2H-NAPHTHO[2,1-c]PYRAN-7-CARBOXYLATE when it became known that the original chemical name was in error. This change is on the public record as the Schedule 9 amendment was published in the Commonwealth of Australia Gazette No GN 49 on 11 December 2002 with the basis for the decision included in the record of the reasons for the October NDPSC 2002 meeting on the Therapeutic Goods Administration website.

(3) and (4) NDPSC records do not identify the exact source of the incorrect chemical name for Salvinorin A.

(5) Yes, the chemical name for Salvinorin A listed in Schedule 9 of the SUSDP No. 18 meets the SUSDP definition of an approved name.

Australian Broadcasting Authority: Licence Allocation Process
(Repeat No. 1965)

Mr Murphy asked the Minister representing the Minister for Communications, Information Technology and the Arts, upon notice, on 29 May 2003:

(1) Is the Minister aware that the Australian Broadcasting Authority (ABA) has decided not to allocate the Sydney AM 1386 Licence, notwithstanding a lengthy community tendering process.

(2) Why has the ABA decided not to allocate this licence.

(3) Is he aware that the ABA has also refused to allocate licences following equally lengthy community tendering processes for Wollongong, Lithgow and Cootamundra in New South Wales.

(4) What reasons has the ABA given the Minister for publicly calling on community organisations to bid for such licences at considerable expense, only to refuse to allocate the licences on four separate occasions.

(5) What steps is the Minister taking to ensure that the applicants for broadcasting licences are not exposed to lengthy bidding processes that result in no decision to award a licence being made.

Mr McGauran—The Minister for Communications, Information Technology and the Arts has provided the following answer to the honourable member’s question:

(1) Yes, the ABA advertised for applications for a community radio broadcasting licence for Sydney (SL1150757) on 15 July 2002. The service was to operate on the AM band (1386kHz) and was expected to transmit from Homebush.

The ABA received eight applications for the licence and decided not to allocate the licence on 13 March 2003. It issued a news release on 26 March 2003 announcing the decision.
In deciding whether to allocate a community radio broadcasting licence, the ABA must have regard to the matters set out at Section 84(2) of the Broadcasting Services Act 1992 (the Act). These are:

- the extent to which the proposed service would meet the existing and perceived future needs of the community within the licence area of the proposed licence; and
- the nature and diversity of the interests of that community; and
- the nature and diversity of other broadcasting services (including national broadcasting services) available within that licence area; and
- the capacity of the applicant to provide the proposed service; and
- the undesirability of one person being in a position to exercise control of more than one community broadcasting licence that is a broadcasting services bands licence in the same licence area; and
- the undesirability of the Commonwealth, a State or a Territory or a political party being in a position to exercise control of a community broadcasting licence.

Section 85 of the Act provides that the ABA is not required to allocate a licence to any applicant.

The ABA has advised that in the case of the Sydney licence allocation process it found that there was no applicant in respect of whom it was satisfied that:

- their proposed service would meet the existing and perceived future needs of the community within the Sydney RA1 licence area;
- they had the capacity to establish and operate the proposed service and meet the conditions applicable under the licence; and
- their service would add significantly to the diversity of the range of existing radio services in the Sydney RA1 licence area.

Yes. The Minister is aware of the licence allocation processes that took place in Wollongong, Lithgow and Cootamundra. In each case the ABA considered the matters set out in Section 84(2) of the Act.

In the case of Wollongong, the ABA advertised for a community radio broadcasting licence (SL1150266) on 11 September 2002. There were two applicants. The ABA found that neither applicant was able to demonstrate that its proposed service would meet the existing and perceived future needs of the community in the Wollongong licence area, nor was the ABA satisfied of the capacity of the applicants to establish and maintain a community broadcasting service. The ABA decided not to allocate the licence on 27 February 2003 and issued a news release on 4 March 2003 announcing the decision.

In the case of Lithgow, the ABA advertised for a community radio broadcasting licence (SL10282) on 11 September 2002. There was one applicant only. The ABA was not satisfied that the applicant had the capacity to establish and maintain a community broadcasting service. The ABA also found that the applicant had failed to demonstrate that the proposed service would meet the existing and perceived future needs of the Lithgow licence area. The ABA decided not to allocate the licence on 30 January 2003 and issued a news release on 4 March 2003 announcing the decision.

In the case of Cootamundra, the ABA advertised for a community radio broadcasting licence (SL1150801) on 9 August 2002. There was one applicant only. The ABA was not satisfied that the applicant had the capacity to establish and maintain a community broadcasting service. The ABA also found that the applicant failed to demonstrate that there was a need for the proposed service or that there was community support. The ABA decided not to allocate the licence on 13 February 2003 and issued a news release on 18 February 2003 announcing the decision.
(4) The ABA is responsible for planning the number and type of radio services to be available in different parts of Australia and has made new community radio broadcasting services available in many licence areas across Australia.

Although the ABA is not required to allocate a community radio broadcasting licence, the ABA has advised that a decision not to allocate is only made where it has serious concerns that the public interest will not be served by the allocation of a licence at that point in time. This is likely to be the case where there is no applicant for the licence that is able to demonstrate that:

- they have the financial, technical and management capacity to establish and maintain a community broadcasting service;
- their proposed service will meet an existing community need and that strategies are in place to respond to changing community needs; and
- their proposed service would add to the diversity of services available to the community.

The ABA has advised that it was these considerations that led it to decide not to allocate community radio broadcasting licences in Sydney, Wollongong, Lithgow and Cootamundra.

(5) As mentioned above, in deciding whether to allocate a community radio broadcasting licence, the ABA must have regard to the matters set out at Section 84(2) of the Act. As a matter of principle, the Government intervenes as little as possible in the independent decision making processes of the ABA.

In general, where the ABA decides not to allocate a licence, spectrum is made available to allow aspirant groups to conduct temporary broadcasts. This enables aspirant groups to address the ABA’s reasons for not having allocated the licence and develop their capacity. In general, the ABA reviews the situation 12 months after the decision not to allocate the licence with a view to deciding whether to realvertise the availability of the licence. This is what has occurred in relation to Wollongong, Lithgow and Cootamundra.

In relation to the Sydney licence, the ABA decided not to make 1386 AM available for other broadcasting purposes, such as temporary community broadcasting licences, in light of concerns about the proximity of new residential developments to AM transmission towers in the Homebush area. The ABA has indicated that it will review the situation in 12 months.

**Defence: Battle of Long Tan**

(Question No. 1973 and 1974)

Ms King asked the Minister representing the Minister for Defence, upon notice, on 2 June 2003:

Was “D” Company to be presented with a Vietnamese Unit Citation and/or were Vietnamese bravery awards to be presented to certain individual soldiers on 2 September 1966; if so, was any intervention made by Australian officials in Vietnam that prevented the presentation of these citations.

Mrs Vale—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

Immediately following the Battle of Long Tan, South Vietnamese Generals Thieu and Khang (Commander III Corps) planned a surprise visit to the Task Force to make individual awards to Australians involved in the Battle of Long Tan. After seeking advice from the Australian Ambassador concerning the foreign awards policy as it existed at the time, the South Vietnamese Government, through General Thieu’s office, was informed that Australians could receive awards, but the permission of Her Majesty The Queen was required for them to be officially accepted. In view of this advice, General Thieu decided against making awards but to mark his visit to the Task Force by the presentation of a plaque and gifts of souvenirs. There is no evidence that an award of a South Vietnamese Unit Citation was ever intended to be awarded. This is highlighted in the Defence Principal Administrative Officer’s Commit-
tee meeting minutes of the time, in which it states that no comparable South Vietnamese Unit Award to the United States Presidential Unit Citation had been offered in connection with the action at Long Tan.

Communications: Radio Blackspots Program
(Question No. 1977)

Mr Tanner asked the Minister representing the Minister for Communications, Information Technology and the Arts, upon notice, on 2 June 2003:

(1) Is it the case that the coalition promised to provide $6 million for radio blackspots during the 2001 election campaign.
(2) Is the funding for this program $5 million.
(3) Is $1.4 million of the funding for this program allocated for administration; if so, how will this $1.4 million be spent.

Mr McGauran—The Minister for Communications, Information Technology and the Arts has provided the following answer to the honourable member’s question:

(1) The Coalition commitment to a Radio Blackspots Program was estimated at $6.5 million to provide commercial radio coverage for an estimated 187 projects to serve 142 communities in regional Australia.
(2) Total funding of $5 million over 3 years was approved in the 2002-03 Budget on the basis of funding one blackspot project for each of the 142 identified communities and on the basis of Department of Finance and Administration costings of the government’s election commitment.
(3) $1.4 million has been allocated over 3 years in Departmental funds to cover administrative costs including salaries and administration, technical consultants and radiospectrum planning: $0.4 million in 2002-03, $0.5 million in 2003-04 and $0.5 million in 2004-05.

Education: Universities
(Question No. 1980)

Ms George asked the Minister for Education, Science and Training, upon notice, on 2 June 2003:

(1) Is he aware of the significant contribution the University of Wollongong makes to the local community through employment, access to education, private sector partnerships, research and the injection of money into the local economy; if not, why not; if so, how is this contribution different or less onerous than that of the universities listed in his media release of 13 May, Funding Boost for Regional Universities and Campuses.
(2) Will he list the University campuses that are outside capital cities indicating, (a) which of those campuses did not qualify for the regional loading, (b) in which federal electoral division each campus is located, (c) who is the sitting member, (d) which party they represent, and (e) by what two party preferred margin they hold the seat.
(3) How and why was the requirement that a university must be in a population centre less than 250,000 people determined to be a correct measure of a university’s regional status to be eligible for the regional loading.
(4) Was Wollongong’s population of 257,000 considered when the criteria for regional loading were set; if not, why not; if so, what impact did Wollongong’s size have on setting the mark at 250,000.
(5) Is it the case that the cut off points were set in order to prevent the University of Wollongong from qualifying for funding; if not, why not.
(6) How and why did he determine the criteria that a university must be a certain distance from the closest mainland capital city and size of institution to be a correct measure of a university’s
regional status and how and why was the figure of 10,000 Equivalent Full-time Student Units determined to be a correct measure of a university’s regional status.

(7) In respect of the University of Wollongong, is he aware that (a) Bega’s population is far fewer than 250,000, it is around 465km from Sydney and has far fewer then 10,000 EFTSU; (b) Shoalhaven’s population is fewer than 250,000, it is around 165km from Sydney and has far fewer then 10,000 EFTSU; (c) Batemans Bay’s population is fewer than 250,000, it is around 280km from Sydney and has far fewer then 10,000 EFTSU, and (d) Moss Vale’s population is fewer than 250,000, it is around 122km from Sydney and has far fewer then 10,000 EFTSU.

(8) Is it the case that eligibility for funding is on a campus-by-campus basis; if so, why have the University of Wollongong campuses been denied the regional loading.

(9) Do the University of Wollongong campuses of Bega, Shoalhaven, Batemans Bay and Moss Vale satisfy the criteria for regional loading; if not, why not; if so, will he give a commitment to have the above campuses included in the regional loading; if not, why not.

(10) Is it the case that the University of Wollongong is extremely close to each of the cut off points to be eligible for the regional loading; if so, will he grant the University of Wollongong the regional loading; if not, why not.

Dr Nelson—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) I am aware of the important contribution that the University of Wollongong makes to its region. As argued by the Vice-Chancellors, the objectives of the regional loading programme are not directed primarily to rewarding institutions for their contribution in regional areas, but to addressing the additional costs they incur due to location, size and history and the financial disadvantages they suffer from less potential to diversify revenue sources. It is a table of ‘remote’ loadings.

(2) (a) Regional campuses that are outside capital cities and do not currently qualify for the regional loading include the Callaghan campus of the University of Newcastle, the Wollongong campus of the University of Wollongong, the Gold Coast campus of Griffith University and the Tweed Heads campus of Southern Cross University.

(b), (c) and (d) The electorates, local members, party and the latest election result for these campuses are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Campus</th>
<th>Seat</th>
<th>Sitting Member</th>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Election result</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Callaghan</td>
<td>Newcastle</td>
<td>Sharon Grierson</td>
<td>Australian Labor Party</td>
<td>56.91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wollongong</td>
<td>Cunningham</td>
<td>Michael Organ</td>
<td>Greens</td>
<td>52.23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gold Coast</td>
<td>Moncrieff</td>
<td>Steven Ciobo</td>
<td>Liberal Party of Australia</td>
<td>65.42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tweed Heads</td>
<td>Richmond</td>
<td>The Hon Larry Anthony</td>
<td>National Party of Australia</td>
<td>51.68%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(3) The two criteria for eligibility for a regional campus are that it is located outside the mainland State capital city area and located in a population centre of less than 250,000. These criteria are used as a measure of the disadvantages that a university regional campus faces in terms of operational costs, for example, the costs of communication and other services, staff travel, attracting staff and students, and less potential to diversify revenue sources, for example, fee paying students and fewer opportunities for commercial partnerships. The disadvantages apply to the regional campus and not to the institution as a whole. The figure of 250,000 was considered to be a significant population centre.

(4) The cut-off for the regional loading was not set to exclude the University of Wollongong. The figure of 250,000 was considered to be a significant population centre. Similarly, the Gold Coast campus of Griffith University and the Tweed Heads campus of Southern Cross University were
excluded on the basis of the population of the Gold Coast-Tweed Statistical District and the Callaghan and Ourimbah campuses of the University of Newcastle.

(5) The matter is addressed in the reply to question 4.

(6) The criteria of distance from a mainland State capital city area and the size of the institution are not used as determinants of regionality for universities. These criteria are used to allocate eligible regional campuses to the four bands for the regional loading. The criteria are used as indicators of the relative disadvantages that regional campuses face in terms of cost and opportunities, some based on location and some on the size of the institution, that is, a large institution would have greater resources to support regional campuses.

(7) The regional campuses of the University of Wollongong at Bega, Nowra, Batemans Bay and Moss Vale qualify for the regional loading. The original list of eligible campuses published by the Government was always an indicative list. The four campuses qualify under the criteria for eligibility as regional campuses. The indicator of 10 000 EFTSU refers to the student load of the institution as a whole and not the student load at the regional campus.

(8) See answer to question 7 above.

(9) See answer to question 7 above.

(10) Although the University of Wollongong is close to the cut-off point for eligibility for the regional loading at its Wollongong campus, the campus does not meet the criteria. I invited the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Gerard Sutton, in collaboration with the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Newcastle, Professor Holmes, to submit a proposal to me for consideration, relating to the two universities and their regionality.

Defence: Board of Inquiry
(Question No. 1984)

Mr Price asked the Minister Assisting the Minister for Defence, upon notice, on 3 June 2003:

(1) Has the widow of Sapper Andrew John Morrison sought interviews with Senior Officers of the ADF; if so, when and with whom.

(2) Were these requests acceded to; if not, why not and does this reflect the Minister for Defence’s policy in these matters.

Mrs Vale—The answer to the honourable member’s questions is as follows:

(1) Yes. Mrs Morrison telephoned the Vice Chief of the Defence Force in May 2003 with the intention of arranging an interview with him to address a number of concerns with regard to the Board of Inquiry. The Vice Chief of the Defence Force’s staff contacted the office of the Chief of Army on 14 May 2003 and the Director Personnel Operations – Army made contact with Mrs Morrison that day to discuss these issues.

(2) Yes. Mrs Morrison’s concerns are being progressed and I am advised that she is satisfied her concerns are being dealt with appropriately.

Calare Electorate: Aged Care Places
(Question No. 1987)

Mr Andren asked the Minister representing the Minister for Health and Ageing, upon notice, on 3 June 2003:

(1) In respect of the 2003 allocation of aged care places, is the Minister aware that in the electoral division of Calare, in Bathurst, Orange and Cowra, there are at least 164 people on waiting lists for High Care, Low Care and Community Aged Care Packages.
(2) Will the Minister explain why there have been no aged care places specifically allocated to the Central West.

(3) Is the Minister aware that in the Macquarie region the number of people on waiting lists for aged care places in Cobar, Mudgee and Dubbo is at least 184.

(4) Will the Minister provide a breakdown of the numbers of people on waiting lists for (a) High Care, (b) Low Care, and (c) Community Care aged care places, in each of the regions of (i) Illawarra, (ii) Mid North Coast, (iii) Northern Sydney, and (iv) South East Sydney.

Mr Andrews—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) (3) and (4) The Department of Health and Ageing does not maintain lists of applicants for entry to residential aged care or a Community Aged Care Package. Care providers may, if they wish, maintain private lists of those who have applied for entry to the services they provide.

(2) Applicants interested in providing aged care services to the Central West Aged Care Planning Region are able to apply for up to 20 Community Aged Care Packages in the 2003 Aged Care Approvals Round.

Overall, the region is currently well above the operational ratio and is expected to remain so beyond 2006, based on the projected growth in the aged population. Over the last four years, the Government has allocated a total of 292 aged care places worth $3.5 million in annual recurrent funding to the region.

Agriculture: Wheat Streak Mosaic Virus

(Question No. 1990)

Mr Andren asked the Minister for Education, Science and Training, upon notice, on 3 June 2003:

(1) In respect of the Genetically Modified Organism (GMO) record kept by the Office of the Gene Technology Regulator (OGTR) and, in particular, “Dealings Not Involving Intentional Release (DNIR)” licence GMAC 5607 entitled “The use of virus vectors for gene silencing in plants (Virus Induced Gene Silencing)”, which of the virus substances named as parent organisms in the licence have been the subject of research in the laboratories of the CSIRO under the terms of the licence.

(2) In respect of the review of research biosecurity protocols and processes at Australia’s plant breeding research institutions, does the review panel include a competent practising independent plant virologist; if not, why not.

(3) In respect of the identity of the two strains of Wheat Streak Mosaic Virus recently found in Australia (a) where was each strain found, (b) to which publicly reported Wheat Streak Mosaic Virus isolate is each of the Australian strains most closely related, and (c) does such information indicate when and how each strain of the virus may have breached the nation’s quarantine barriers; if so, would he provide that information.

Dr Nelson—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) Of the seven viruses named in GMAC licence 5607, the following five have been imported in accordance with the terms of the licence, and have been the subject of research at CSIRO Plant Industry laboratories at Black Mountain in the Australian Capital Territory: Tobacco Mosaic Virus; Barley Yellow Dwarf Mosaic Virus; Potato Virus X; Johnson Grass Mosaic Virus; and Foxtail Mosaic Virus.

Although the Brome Mosaic Virus and Wheat Streak Mosaic Virus were nominated in GMAC licence 5607, CSIRO did not import these two viruses, as the other viruses proved sufficient for the research.

(2) This question is the responsibility of the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry.
(3) This question is the responsibility of the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry.

**Communications: Special Broadcasting Service**

(Question No. 1998)

**Mr Danby** asked the Minister representing the Minister for Communications, Information Technology and the Arts, upon notice, on 4 June 2003:

(1) Has there been a fundamental shift in the editorial and production standards at SBS that would have lowered the editorial standard of the public broadcaster.

(2) Is it the case that the current affairs and news programs of SBS no longer have editors and producers, and that single journalists operate and interview on their own; if so, (a) is this a cost cutting or saving device, and (b) has it been discussed or authorised by the SBS Board.

(3) Is this new process used for Dateline, Insight and the SBS News; if so, (a) has it lead to any decline in the standard of presentation of these programs, and (b) if there has been a decline, has the SBS Board or senior management weighed these costs savings against the drop in editorial standards.

(4) Was there any editorial or production oversight of the SBS Dateline program that accused the Zimbabwean Opposition Leader of wanting to assassinate the Zimbabwean President, Mr Robert Mugabe.

(5) Was there a single reporter using a digicam to produce the program that aired the allegations and was there widespread consultation at the SBS editorial level before the allegations were telecast.

(6) Is the defamation suit undertaken by Morgan Tsvangarai still in process; if so, is the Minister able to say what is SBS’s estimate of the damages if the defamation suit were to be successful.

**Mr McGauran**—The Minister for Communications, Information Technology and the Arts has provided the following answer to the honourable member’s question:

SBS has provided the following responses to the question.

(1) No.

(2) No - SBS news and current affairs programs have editors and producers. While it is correct to say that in some cases single journalists conduct interviews and film a story, such stories are subject to the usual editorial and production processes.

(3) No.

(4) Yes.

(5) Yes. There was a single reporter using a digicam to produce the program that aired the allegations. However, the material was supplemented by information and pictures from a range of sources.

Yes, there was widespread consultation at the SBS editorial level before the allegations were telecast.

(6) Yes. As the proceedings are pending, it would be inappropriate for SBS to disclose elements of its legal advice.

**Immigration: Protection Visas**

(Question No. 2004)

**Mr Brendan O’Connor** asked the Minister for Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs, upon notice, on 5 June 2003:

For each year from 1996 to the present in the electoral division of Burke, how many (a) people applied for a protection visa, (b) applications were successful, (c) applications are outstanding, (d) applications were heard at the Refugee Review Tribunal, (e) applicants appealed to him under Section 417, and (f) applicants who made appeals under Section 417 were granted protection visas.

**QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**
Mr Ruddock—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

DIMIA electronic systems do not record the electoral divisions within which protection visa (PV) applicants reside. Therefore I cannot provide the information requested for PV applicants living in the electoral division of Burke. Information in relation to the State of Victoria, within which the electoral division of Burke is located, is set out below.

Protection Visa Activity – Victoria – 1996-97 to 2002-03 (as at 31 May 2003)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<td>Applications lodged</td>
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<td>1398</td>
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<td>1536</td>
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<td>PV grants</td>
<td>656</td>
<td>380</td>
<td>363</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>384</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>178</td>
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<td>Primary on hand - as at end of each program year</td>
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<td>1878</td>
<td>1861</td>
<td>1946</td>
<td>1925</td>
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<td>2301</td>
<td>1201</td>
<td>885</td>
<td>953</td>
<td>1132</td>
<td>1219</td>
<td>1475</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applicants with 417 requests</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>409</td>
<td>512</td>
<td>526</td>
<td>1175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applicants granted PV under s417</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: ICSE data as at 31 May 2003

Note: Data prior to 1 July 1999 was migrated into ICSE and may be less reliable than later years.

* - Reliable data on the number of s417 requests prior to 1 July 1999 is not available.

Trade: US Bilateral Deal
(Question No. 2007)

Mr Brendan O’Connor asked the Minister for Trade, upon notice, on 5 June 2003:
Can he guarantee that local television content rules will not be part of any bilateral trade deal with the United States?

Mr Vaile—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

The Government’s statement of objectives for the Free Trade Agreement negotiations with the United States, which I announced on 3 March 2003, specifies that we will ensure the negotiations take account of Australia’s cultural and social policy objectives, and the need for appropriate regulation and support measures to achieve these objectives in areas such as audiovisual media.

The negotiations will provide us with an opportunity to explain to the US the objectives and basis for our policy interventions in the audiovisual sector. We consider that these interventions are modest and targeted at addressing a range of market failures. They ensure a diversity of Australian product is available to the Australian community to enable a choice in their viewing experience. Importantly, they are not aimed at keeping out imports, and Australia is a substantial net importer of audiovisual services and products.

The US has not yet made any requests for commitments from Australia in relation to the audiovisual sector. However, at the press conference at the second round of negotiations, the US Chief Negotiator, Ralph Ives, indicated that the US would not be seeking to abolish either the TV local content requirements or the subsidies provided to the film and TV industry.

US industry has been quoted in the press as seeking a standstill commitment on Australia’s local content requirements. If the US Administration does seek such a standstill commitment, we will need to assess this carefully in the light of the Government’s position that it wants to maintain sufficient flexibility to achieve its cultural and social policy objectives in the audiovisual sector.
The Government is fully aware of the sensitivities of the cultural and entertainment sectors with regard to the negotiations and we have consulted a wide range of stakeholders from those sectors in the lead-up to the commencement of negotiations in March. We are continuing extensive consultations as the negotiations progress.

Child Support Agency: Data
(Question No. 2008)

Mr Organ asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, upon notice, on 5 June 2003:

On the most recent data, how many Child Support Agency clients reside in (a) the State of New South Wales, and (b) in postcode areas of (i) 2508, (ii) 2515, (iii) 2516, (iv) 2517, (v) 2518, (vi) 2519, (vii) 2500, (viii) 2525, and (ix) 2526.

Mr Anthony—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(a) There are approximately 213 000 payers and 212 000 payees residing in the State of NSW.

(b) (i) (ii) (iii) (iv) (v) (vi) (vii) (viii) and (ix).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Postcode</th>
<th>No. of Payers</th>
<th>No. of Payees</th>
<th>Total No. of clients</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2508</td>
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<td>241</td>
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<td>526</td>
<td>932</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Internet: Gambling
(Question No. 2011)

Ms Hoare asked the Minister representing the Minister for Communications, Information Technology and the Arts, upon notice, on 5 June 2003:

(1) Is he aware that Internet-based gambling can be accessed by Australians.

(2) Do existing laws prevent Australians from accessing on-line gambling services; if so (a) what measures are in place, and (b) are they successful.

(3) If existing laws do not prevent Australians accessing on-line gambling, is he able to say how much money leaves Australian in payment for offshore on-line gambling services.

(4) What measures are in place to ensure that the offshore on-line gambling services receiving payment from Australians are not owned by outlawed terrorist organisations.

Mr McGauran—The Minister for Communications, Information Technology and the Arts has provided the following answer to the honourable member’s question:

(1) and (2)

In 1999 the Productivity Commission identified technologies such as the Internet, digital and interactive television, and advanced mobile telephony as having the potential to bring about a significant increase in accessibility to gambling services. The Government was particularly concerned that the interactive nature of these services could attract new and younger markets of Australian gamblers.

In order to mitigate the spread of gambling through new online technologies, the Parliament passed the Interactive Gambling Act 2001 (IGA), which places restrictions on provision of interactive
The IGA introduces a regulatory framework at the Commonwealth level which specifically addresses community concerns about the availability and accessibility of interactive gambling in Australia.

As part of the framework established by the IGA, the Australian Broadcasting Authority (ABA) administers a complaints scheme under which Australian residents or companies trading in Australia are able to complain to the ABA if they believe that Australians can access ‘prohibited Internet gambling content’, as defined by the legislation and typically involving the Internet to play games of chance, or games of mixed chance and skill.

The IGA makes it an offence to provide prohibited interactive gambling services to customers physically located in Australia. This offence, which carries a maximum penalty of $220,000 per day for individuals and $1.1 million per day for corporations, applies to all interactive gambling service providers, whether based in Australia or offshore, whether Australian or foreign-owned. The IGA also makes it an offence to advertise interactive gambling services in Australia.

The main offence provision of the Act applies to the provision of interactive gambling services to customers physically located in Australia. The IGA does not make illegal Australians accessing interactive gambling services. The Government does not wish to force problem gamblers underground, as this would potentially lessen the likelihood of them, or their families, seeking assistance.

The ABA is required to investigate complaints and refer Australian-hosted prohibited Internet gambling content to the Australian Federal Police (AFP) or a State or Territory police force if it considers the complaint should be so referred. If the prohibited Internet gambling content is hosted overseas, the ABA is required to notify the makers of filters listed in Schedule 1 to the Interactive Gambling Industry Code (the Code). The Code requires Internet Service Providers to provide their customers with one of the approved filters listed in Schedule 1 of the Code.

With regard to the effectiveness of the IGA, the Minister for Communications, Information Technology and the Arts is required, under section 68 of the Act, to cause to be conducted a review of issues related to interactive gambling regulation in Australia before 1 July 2003.

The Minister instructed the Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts to conduct the review and consider a broad range of issues, including the operation of the IGA and its effectiveness in dealing with the social and commercial impact of interactive gambling services, among other matters. To this end, the Department issued a call for submissions from members of the public and organisations wishing to comment on the matters to be considered. Over 40 submissions were received. The Minister expects to receive a report of the review later this year.

(3) As noted above, the review of issues related to interactive gambling regulation in Australia, currently being conducted by the Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts, is considering the growth of interactive gambling services and their use by customers in Australia, among other matters. An assessment of the use of domestic and offshore interactive gambling services by Australians will be provided in this context.

(4) The Interactive Gambling Act 2001 does not contain specific measures pertaining to the ownership of domestic or offshore interactive gambling service providers or the payment of money to such organisations by Australians. The Attorney-General’s Department has advised the following measures have been implemented to address the payment of money to terrorist organisations.

If a bank or other financial institution in Australia receives a claim for payment (including for example a claim by an offshore on-line gambling service against a person’s credit card or account) and the financial institution has reasonable grounds to suspect that the transaction may be related to a financing of terrorism offence or any other offence against a law of the Commonwealth or Territory, the financial institution is required to lodge a suspect transaction report with the...
Australian Transaction Reports and Analysis Centre (subsection 16(1A) of the Financial Transaction Reports Act 1988).

In addition it is a criminal offence for persons, including for example financial institutions in Australia, who hold assets that are owned or controlled by proscribed persons or entities to use or deal with those assets (Part 4 of the Charter of the United Nations Act 1945). It is also a criminal offence to make assets available to such proscribed persons or entities. Proscribed persons or entities are listed by the Minister for Foreign Affairs in the Government Gazette.

Part 4 of the Charter of the United Nations Act implements obligations for Member States to freeze without delay funds, and other financial assets or economic resources, of persons who commit, or attempt to commit, terrorist acts or facilitate their commission.

**Health: Hearing Aids**

(Question No. 2025)

Mrs Irwin asked the Minister representing the Minister for Health and Ageing, upon notice, on 16 June 2003:

1. What classes of persons are eligible for Commonwealth assistance for the provision, repair and provision of batteries for hearing aids.
2. Why are persons over the age of 21 years not eligible for assistance.

Mr Andrews—The Minister for Ageing has provided the following answer to the honourable member’s question:

1. The Commonwealth provides hearing aids, hearing rehabilitation, hearing aid repairs and the provision of batteries for hearing aids through the Commonwealth Hearing Services Program.

There are two different components to the Commonwealth Hearing Services Program each with their own eligibility criteria. The first component is the provision of hearing services through the Commonwealth Hearing Services Program Voucher scheme. The Voucher scheme is available to Australian citizens or permanent residents 21 years or older, who are in one of the following categories:

- a Pensioner Concession Card Holder;
- a person receiving Sickness Allowance from Centrelink;
- the holder of a Gold Repatriation Health Card;
- the holder of a White Repatriation Health Card issued for conditions which include hearing loss;
- a dependant of a person in one of the above categories;
- a member of the Australian Defence Force; or
- a person undergoing a vocational rehabilitation program with Commonwealth Rehabilitation Service (CRS) Australia and who is referred by their case manager.

The second component is the provision of hearing services through the government provider, Australian Hearing as part of their Community Service Obligations. These services are available to people who are in one of the following categories:

- Australian citizens or permanent residents under 21 years of age;
- Comcare clients referred under an agreement between Comcare and Australian Hearing (note that batteries are only provided for the first year for these clients);
- Aboriginal persons and Torres Strait Islanders who would otherwise be eligible under the Voucher scheme;
- an Australian citizen or permanent resident who has a profound hearing loss or hearing loss and severe communication impairment who would otherwise be eligible under the Voucher scheme; or
- an Australian citizen or permanent resident who resides in, and receives his or her hearing services in, a remote area as defined in Schedule 2 of the Declared Hearing Services Determination 1997 who would otherwise be eligible under the Voucher scheme.

(2) Eligible people over the age of 21 years as prescribed by the Hearing Services Administration Act 1997 and the Australian Hearing Services Act 1991, and described above, are eligible for Commonwealth assistance with the provision of hearing aids and repair, and the provision of batteries. The Commonwealth Hearing Services Program is targeted to ensure that services available under the Program are available to those with the greatest need.

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**Immigration: Asylum Seekers**

(Question No. 2029)

Mr Organ asked the Minister for Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs, upon notice, on 17 June 2003:

(1) Can he provide the Memorandum of Understanding recently made with the Iranian Government.

(2) What safeguards have been put in place to guarantee the safety of those who are voluntarily repatriated or forcibly deported to Iran.

(3) What investigations has he made into the wellbeing of earlier asylum seekers that returned to Iran from Australia.

(4) What representations have been made to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to monitor the safety of asylum seekers that voluntarily return to Iran.

(5) Can he provide details about any charter flight that has been considered to return Iranian asylum seekers to Iran.

(6) Can he confirm that no Iranian asylum seekers are being offered voluntary repatriation packages or being removed from Australia against their will if (a) Australia is found to owe them protection obligations under the Refugee Convention, (b) their applications for asylum are before the Refugee Review Tribunal, or (c) their applications for asylum are before the Courts.

Mr Ruddock—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) On the 12 March 2003, I signed a Memorandum of Understanding on consular matters (MOU) with a representative of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The MOU was signed on the understanding that it is a confidential agreement between the two countries. The Government of Iran has requested that the MOU not be made public at this time. The Australian government will respect that request.

(2) As with all individuals in Australia without authorisation, Iranian nationals have access to an exhaustive refugee determination process, which includes merits and judicial review. Individuals are not removed where this would place Australia in breach of its international obligations relating to the removal of non-citizens.

(3) The Australian government takes seriously its obligation not to refoule refugees, but also respects the principles of state sovereignty and does not monitor non-Australian citizens in foreign countries.

(4) As Australia respects the principles of state sovereignty and does not monitor non-Australian citizens in foreign countries, no representations have been made to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.
(5) My Department, when overseeing removal arrangements, is conscious of the need for the proper care and support for the return of the detainees in safety and with dignity. Returns may occur using commercial flights or charter aircraft, with detainees under escort in each case. For privacy and security reasons, details of voluntary and involuntary removal arrangements are not made public.

(6) The MOU provides for the offer of reintegration assistance to those Iranian nationals who have no legal right to remain in Australia. Any Iranian detainees with applications before the Department or with actions before the courts, but who now wish to return voluntarily can also take up the reintegration assistance package upon withdrawal of their remaining applications. Those Iranian detainees with current applications to remain in Australia who are ultimately refused will be also offered the reintegration assistance package at that time.

The Government has always stated that those who have been through the relevant processes and have been found not to have a legal right to remain in Australia would be removed. This removal can be on an involuntary basis if necessary. Detainees with no legal right to remain in Australia are counselled on their options for returning voluntarily to their country of nationality or third countries where they have a right to enter.

Foreign Affairs: Burma

(Question No. 2033)

Mr Danby asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs, upon notice, on 18 June 2003:

(1) Is he aware of reports that the leader of the Burmese democratic movement, Aung San Suu Kyi, has been placed under arrest by the Burmese authorities.

(2) What information does he have about (a) the circumstances of her arrest, (b) the conditions under which she is being held and (c) on what basis she is being held.

(3) Is he aware that a further 250 supporters of Aung San Suu Kyi were arrested and a further 100 are missing.

(4) What information does he have about (a) the circumstances of their arrest, (b) the conditions under which they are being held and (c) on what basis they are being held.

(5) Has the Government made any representations to the Burmese authorities about these arrests and disappearances; if so, what were the content of the representations and what were the responses; if not, why not.

(6) Has the Government called for (a) her immediate release, (b) UN Special Envoy, Mr Razali Ismail, to be granted access to her, (c) the immediate release of the other supporters who were arrested, (d) the International Committee of the Red Cross to be granted access to the site of the arrests to conduct an independent investigation, and/or (e) the resumption of talks aimed at restoring democracy in Burma.

(7) Will he explain what the Government’s policy is on the restoration of democracy in Burma.

Mr Downer—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) Yes.

(2) (a) Aung San Suu Kyi was taken into custody by Burmese authorities on 30 May following clashes between her supporters and pro-government supporters where she was travelling in northern Burma. (b) To date, the United Nations Special Envoy to Burma, Mr Tan Sri Razali Ismail, is the only non-Burmese to have been given access to Aung San Suu Kyi. He described the conditions under which Aung San Suu Kyi was being held as “deplorable”. Media reports have suggested that on July 2 Aung San Suu Kyi was moved from Insein Gaol in Rangoon to a new location 40kms northeast of Rangoon. (c) Burmese authorities have not publicly offered a legal
basis for Aung San Suu Kyi’s detention; they have said she is being held in “protective custody” for her own security.

(3) The Government is aware that a number of National League for Democracy (NLD) members or supporters were detained on 30 May 2003. It is not possible at this time to confirm the exact number of individuals detained or missing.

(4) (a) (b) (c) Despite the urgings of Australia and many other countries, the Burmese authorities have not provided any detailed information on these matters. The Government is not, therefore, in a position to comment.

(5) Yes. The Government has called for the immediate release of Aung San Suu Kyi and her supporters on a number of occasions and urged the Burmese Government to commit itself to a genuine process of political reconciliation. I made these points during a meeting with the Burmese Foreign Minister, U Win Aung, in Phnom Penh on 18 June. We have also urged the Burmese authorities to grant access to the International Committee of the Red Cross to all Burmese detained on 30 May. In response to representations, Burmese Government representatives have defended the decision to place Aung San Suu Kyi in “protective custody”, and have said that this is only a temporary measure. They have not, however, specified when, or under what conditions, she would be released.

(6) (a) Yes. (b) Yes. (c) Yes. (d) Yes. (e) Yes.

(7) The Government urges the Burmese Government to engage in a genuine process of national reconciliation, which encompasses all relevant groups, including the National League for Democracy, and Burma’s many ethnic minorities.

Foreign Affairs: Burma
(Question No. 2040)

Mrs Crosio asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs, upon notice, on 19 June 2003:

(1) What is the Government doing to ensure that the military regime in Burma releases the leader of the National League of Democracy (NLD), Aung San Suu Kyi.

(2) What is the Government’s strategy, other than to open an AFP liaison office in Rangoon, to reduce the level of illicit drugs being exported from Burma, especially heroin.

(3) Has the Government considered the imposition of sanctions on the Burmese Government.

(4) Has the Government engaged in dialogue with other ASEAN members regarding reducing the illicit drug trade from Burma; if so, what are the outcomes of those discussions.

(5) Will he report on the results of the Human Rights Initiative, which has recently been expanded for a further three years.

Mr Downer—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) The Government has called repeatedly for the immediate release of Aung San Suu Kyi and her supporters and urged the Burmese Government to commit itself to a genuine process of political reconciliation. I made these points during a meeting with the Burmese Foreign Minister, U Win Aung, in Phnom Penh on 18 June. My Department has spoken in strong terms to Burmese authorities in Canberra and Rangoon. We have also urged the Burmese authorities to grant access by the International Committee of the Red Cross to all those detained on 30 May, including Aung San Suu Kyi.

(2) Since January 2000, an AFP officer has been on attachment to the Australian Embassy in Rangoon. A second was deployed there in September 2002 to assess the viability of expanding the AFP’s existing presence in Burma. Their main role is to coordinate and support Australian law enforcement interests in Burma, as well as supporting Burmese anti-narcotics activities.
The Government supports a number of United Nations Office for Drugs and Crime (UNODC) activities in Burma, including a community-based demand reduction project and a computer-based law enforcement training project.

Australia is also an active participant and co-chair of the Mini-Dublin Group in Burma, which facilitates dialogue and information exchange amongst member countries on anti-narcotics activities in the region, and promotes cooperation on drug prevention. Mini-Dublin Groups are consultative regional bodies involving the same countries as the central Dublin Group, and include Australia, the US, Japan, Canada and the EU member states.

(3) The Government does not believe that the imposition of sanctions by Australia would be an effective response to recent developments in Burma.

(4) Australia has been engaged over many years and at many levels in a systematic dialogue with Thailand aimed at stemming the flow of drugs from Burma, through Thailand, and on to Australia. At a practical level, Australian Federal Police Officers in Bangkok and Chiang Mai have worked with their Thai counterparts to combat the trafficking of narcotics. Australia has also agreed to assist financially a proposal from Thailand to fund a crop substitution program in Burma to curb narcotics production in that country.

(5) Training workshops conducted under the Human Rights Initiative have provided participants (including government officials and non-government and ethnic group representatives) with a greater understanding and appreciation of international human rights standards, responsibilities and laws. International agencies and non-government organisations operating in Burma have welcomed Australia’s Human Rights Initiative, reporting that it has created the space for them to raise human rights issues at official and political levels within the country.

Higher Education: Participation Rates

(Question No. 2042)

Ms Macklin asked the Minister for Education, Science and Training, upon notice, on 19 June 2003:

(1) in respect of the statement on page 19 of the Higher Education Report for the 2003-05 Triennium which indicates that the proportion of domestic students from low-SES backgrounds has declined from 14.7% in 1991 to 14.5% in 2002, what are the higher education participation rates for Australians from low-SES backgrounds who are (a) 15-19, (b) 20-24, (c) 25-29, (d) 30-34, (e) 35-39, (f) 40-44, (g) 45-49, (h) 50-54, and (i) over 55 years of age.

(2) Further to his statement on SBS Insight on 22 May 2003 that there has been “…an increase from 19% of the poorest socio-economic status 18 year-olds in Australia in 1989 … to 25% of the poorest 18 year olds getting access to higher education [a decade later]”, can he provide equivalent comparative figures for other SES groups over the same period.

Dr Nelson—The answer to the honourable member’s questions is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>1991</th>
<th>2002</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15-19</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>16.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-24</td>
<td>13.9</td>
<td>13.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-29</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>12.5</td>
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<td>30-34</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>13.2</td>
</tr>
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<td>35-39</td>
<td>13.1</td>
<td>14.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-44</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>15.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Age Group** 1991 2002
45-49 12.4 14.8  
50-54 13.2 13.9  
55 and over 15.6 13.3  
Total 14.7 14.5  

Source: Higher Education Statistics Collection

(2) Proportion of 18 year olds undertaking a degree by family wealth

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1988</th>
<th>1998</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lowest quartile</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle quartiles</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Top quartiles</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


**Higher Education: Statistics**  
(Question No. 2044)

*Ms Macklin* asked the Minister for Education, Science and Training, upon notice, on 19 June 2003:

(1) Is it the case that 1998 research by Dr Tom Karmel published on his department’s website indicates that approximately 45% of Australians are likely to enrol in a university at some point during their life and that 90% will enrol in tertiary education.

(2) Does this research remain valid and has any further work been undertaken on the subject since 1998.

*Dr Nelson*—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) Yes.

(2) A paper prepared by Martin and Karmel for the Higher Education at the Crossroads Review, ‘Striving for Quality: Learning, Teaching and Scholarship’, provided an updated calculation which indicated that in the year 2000 the probability of a person participating in higher education was 47 per cent. The probability of a person undertaking tertiary education was not updated and the most recent calculation remains at a 90 per cent probability of undertaking tertiary education at some time during their life.

**Environment: Flora and Fauna Assessment**  
(Question No. 2050)

*Mr Baldwin* asked the Minister for the Environment and Heritage, upon notice, on 23 June 2003:

(1) Was correspondence received by (a) his office or (b) his department, dated 17 November 1999 from the NSW Parks & Wildlife Service (NPWS) expressing an interest in Gan Gan Army Camp should it be disposed of; if so, what action was taken to note that interest in acquiring the Gan Gan Army Camp.

(2) Has any correspondence been received by (a) his office, (b) his department, or (c) consultants, in respect of preparing a flora and fauna assessment on Gan Gan Army camp; if so, (i) what are the details and (ii) did this correspondence signal an intention for the land to be acquired by the NPWS for inclusion as part of the Tommearre National Park; if so, what action was taken.
(3) Were any requests received, at any time, for priority sale or acquisition of Gan Gan Army Camp made by any department of the NSW Government prior to the public tender being issued or during the tender process.

Dr Kemp—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:
(1) No correspondence was received by my office or my department.
(2) No correspondence was received by my office, my department or any consultants engaged by my department.
(3) My department has not received a request from any NSW government Department for priority acquisition.

Aviation: Sydney (Kingsford Smith) Airport
(Question No. 2056)

Mr Murphy asked the Minister for Transport and Regional Services, upon notice, on 23 June 2003:
Will he incorporate the Ministerial Direction relating to the Long Term Operating Plan for Sydney Airport into the Master Plan for Sydney Airport under subsections 71 (f), (g) and (h) of the Airports Act 1996; if so, when; if not why not.

Mr Anderson—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:
I refer the Honourable Member to my answer to question no 1724.

Aviation: Sydney (Kingsford Smith) Airport
(Question No. 2057)

Mr Murphy asked the Minister for Transport and Regional Services, upon notice, on 23 June 2003:
Will he take action to ratify the status of the Master Plan for Sydney Airport as a legally binding agreement between the stakeholders; if so, when; if not, why not.

Mr Anderson—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:
It is not necessary to ratify the Master Plan as a legally binding agreement. The Master Plan for Sydney Airport is required under the Airports Act 1996 and any developments on the airport site are to be consistent with the approved Master Plan.

Australian Petroleum Production and Exploration Association: Oil Refinery Feedstock
(Question No. 2064)

Mr Murphy asked the Minister for Industry, Tourism and Resources, upon notice, on 24 June 2003:
(1) Has he seen a report by the Australian Petroleum Production and Exploration Association that asserts that 65 per cent of oil refinery feedstock is currently imported and that this proportion is increasing?
(2) Is he able to say what proportion of Australian refinery feedstock is currently imported; if not, why not.
(3) Can he confirm that the proportion of Australian refinery feedstock currently imported is increasing; if not, why not.

Mr Hockey—The Acting Minister for Industry, Tourism and Resources has provided the following answer to the honourable member’s question:
(1) No. As far as I am aware, there is no report by the Australian Petroleum Production and Exploration Association (APPEA) that asserts that 65 per cent of oil refinery feedstock is currently imported. However, in his address to the APPEA Conference in Melbourne on 24th March, 2003, the Chairman of APPEA, Dr Malcolm Garratt, noted that the liquids produced by the Australian upstream oil and gas industry provide 35 per cent of Australia’s refinery feedstock. I am aware of this speech. This information would imply that 65 per cent of Australian refinery feedstock is supplied by imported feedstock.

(2) The figure quoted of 65 per cent is generally recognised as accurate. It should be noted that because of geography and composition of Australian oil, a large proportion of domestic consumption is met by imported feedstock while, at the same time, a large proportion of Australian production is exported.

(3) Yes.

Transport: Vehicle Energy Efficiency  
(Question No. 2066)

Mr Murphy asked the Minister for Industry, Tourism and Resources, upon notice, on 24 June 2003:

Can he confirm that the energy efficiency of conventional petrol and diesel engines installed in vehicles used in Australia is generally estimated at between 15 percent and 20 percent, or is he able to say how energy efficient the petrol and diesel engines installed in vehicles used in Australia are; if not, why not.

Mr Hockey—The Acting Minister for Industry, Tourism and Resources has provided the following answer to the honourable member’s question:

Internal combustion engines have inherently low thermodynamic efficiency. The actual values depend on a number of factors such as fuel used, engine technology, compression ratio and the measurement method used. Typically the thermodynamic efficiency for petrol engines is around 30 percent, and other engines, such as high compression diesel engines used in trucks, may have thermodynamic efficiency of more than 40 percent.

It should be noted that thermodynamic efficiency of an internal combustion engine is not equivalent to the overall fuel efficiency of motor vehicles, that is, their capacity to turn the chemical energy of fuel into work. Starting from the inherently inefficient internal combustion engine, there are further energy efficiency losses due to energy lost through the exhaust and cooling system, friction within the drive train, wheel contact with the road, and air resistance. Overall, the energy efficiency of vehicles with conventional petrol and diesel engines in Australia and the rest of the world is generally in the range 15 – 20 percent.

At the most modern end of the vehicle spectrum, hybrid vehicles and hydrogen fuel cell vehicles can deliver overall energy efficiencies well in excess of those of traditional internal combustion engines. Two hybrid vehicles are currently marketed in Australia, namely: Toyota Prius and Honda Insight.

Transport: Vehicle Fuel Consumption  
(Question No. 2067)

Mr Murphy asked the Minister for Industry, Tourism and Resources, upon notice, on 24 June 2003:

(1) What effect has the vehicle energy star rating system now applied to new vehicles sold in Australia had on average vehicle fuel consumption.

(2) What evidence is there from independent sources to show that this system has improved the average fuel consumption of vehicles sold in Australia.
(3) Can he confirm that heavy transport vehicles consume approximately 35% of automotive fuel in Australia.

(4) Does the vehicle energy star rating system apply to heavy transport vehicles sold in Australia; if not, why not.

Mr Hockey—The Acting Minister for Industry, Tourism and Resources has provided the following answer to the honourable member’s question:

(1) There is no vehicle energy star rating system. There is, however, a Fuel Consumption Label for new vehicles, which was introduced in 2001. On 1 July 2003, the Minister for the Environment and Heritage, the Hon Dr David Kemp MP and the Minister for Transport and Regional Services, the Hon John Anderson MP, jointly announced a revised Fuel Consumption Label for new vehicles. The new label includes, in addition to the information on fuel consumption, emission figures for carbon dioxide, a key greenhouse gas. The aim of this system is to raise consumer awareness of the issue of fuel efficiency and carbon dioxide emissions and to make comparative, model specific information available to buyers allowing them to make a more informed purchasing decision.

(2) No studies have yet been done to assess the effect of the labelling scheme on vehicle choice, and therefore on fuel consumption in Australia. A separate Voluntary Code of Practice, which has recently been negotiated with the industry, does however explicitly aim to improve the fuel efficiency of passenger vehicles and sets a target of 18 per cent reduction in fuel consumption by 2010.

(3) No. According to a recent report, Australian Transport Facts 2001 (Apelbaum Consulting Group, 2001), heavy transport vehicles (trucks and buses) consume approximately 20 per cent of automotive fuels in Australia. Small passenger and light commercial vehicles consume approximately 80 per cent of automotive fuels. Consequently the Government’s initial focus for labelling was on light passenger vehicles. With the new label, labelling has been extended to four wheel drives and light commercial vehicles up to 3.5 tonnes.

(4) No, the Fuel Consumption Label described above does not apply to heavy transport vehicles sold in Australia. Operators of heavy transport vehicles have a strong economic incentive to consider fuel efficiency when making equipment investment decisions. The commercial context in which these vehicles are used encourages such an approach in order to remain competitive.

Transport: Vehicle Fuel Consumption

(Question No. 2068)

Mr Murphy asked the Minister for Industry, Tourism and Resources, upon notice, on 24 June 2003:

(1) Has he asked Australian vehicle manufacturers to improve the fuel efficiency of their vehicles by 15 percent; if so (a) when, and (b) what date did he set for this target to be met; if not, why not.

(2) Has this request resulted in a change to the average fuel consumption of vehicles sold in Australia; if so, by how much; if not, why not.

(3) Can he confirm that some recent models of Australian built cars have higher fuel consumption than similar models they replaced; if so, is he able to say which models; if not, why not.

Mr Hockey—The Acting Minister for Industry, Tourism and Resources has provided the following answer to the honourable member’s question:

(1) The Australian automotive industry has agreed to adopt a Voluntary Code of Practice to improve the fuel efficiency of passenger vehicles by 18 per cent. (a) This was announced on 15 April 2003 by the Minister for Industry, Tourism and Resources, the Hon Ian Macfarlane MP, and the Minister for the Environment and Heritage, the Hon Dr David Kemp MP. (b) The agreed target date for achieving the 18 per cent reduction is 2010.
(2) The fuel efficiency agreement was announced in April this year. The target date stipulated in the agreement is 2010. As it typically takes several years for new vehicle models to be developed, there has not been sufficient time to see changes in the fuel economy of vehicles sold in Australia as a result of this agreement.

(3) Current fuel consumption tests incorporate both highway and city-based driving cycles. For some recently released models, fuel consumption has increased over the previous model for one of the driving cycles, while remaining the same or improving for the other one. For the base model BA Falcon sedan released in 2002, with automatic transmission, the highway cycle fuel consumption increased slightly, while its city cycle result remained the same as for the preceding model. For the base model Toyota Camry sedan (also released in 2002), with manual transmission, the city cycle fuel consumption improved over the preceding model for both the four and six cylinder engines, while for the four cylinder model its highway cycle fuel consumption increased slightly and for the six cylinder model it stayed the same. It can be expected that fuel consumption will vary between different models and driving cycles. Over time, however, the overall trend should be downwards to accord with the Voluntary Code of Practice recently agreed with industry.

Export Finance and Insurance Corporation

Dr Emerson asked the Minister for Trade, upon notice, on 25 June 2003:

(1) How much debt is owed by developing countries to the Export Finance and Insurance Corporation (EFIC).

(2) What proportion of this is owed by (a) private companies and (b) sovereign governments.

(3) For each developing country, how much is the total amount owed.

(4) Do the governments of developing countries give sovereign guarantees to the EFIC on debts owed by their country; if so, how common is this.

(5) Do governments of developing countries guarantee borrowings from the EFIC made by companies in their countries; if so, to what extent are governments of developing countries required to do this.

(6) How much of the total debt owed by developing countries to the EFIC is covered by sovereign guarantees issued by the governments of developing countries.

(7) What proportion of the sovereign guarantees made by developing countries to the EFIC covers the debts of private companies in those countries.

(8) What is the impact of the indebtedness of developing countries to the EFIC on the governments’ budgets and spending priorities in those countries.

(9) What assessments, reports or evaluations has the Government made of the impact of the indebtedness of developing countries to the EFIC on the governments’ budgets and spending priorities in those countries.

(10) What would be the impact of preventing or ending sovereign guarantees on developing country debts to the EFIC.

(11) What are the assessment processes the EFIC uses in determining whether to support a project in a developing country.

(12) In assessing each proposal, to what extent does the EFIC evaluate (a) the capacity of a developing country to service the borrowings from the EFIC and (b) the impact of those borrowings on the wider community in that country.

(13) Are processes in place to ensure the EFIC assesses the environmental and social impacts of its support projects in developing countries; if so, (a) what is the procedure for these assessments and (b) are these assessments publicly available.
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(14) What scope is there for participation by the public and community groups in these reviews.

(15) What would be the cost to the Commonwealth of cancelling all debt owed to the EFIC by developing countries.

Mr Vaile—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) Refer 3 below.

(2) Refer 3 below.

(3) Developing country obligations outstanding as at 30 June 2003 (A$) *(a)*

<table>
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<th>Country</th>
<th>Privately Owned Borrowers/Counterparties</th>
<th>Non-Sovereign, Publicly Owned Borrowers/Counterparties</th>
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Share of Total: 7.5% 2.3% 90.2%

*(a)* Amounts listed above refer to medium-long term obligations (ie repayment terms are greater than 2 years).
In addition, Iraq has debts outstanding to EFIC in connection with EFIC insured payment defaults for goods exported prior to the first Gulf War.

Amounts are eligible for debt forgiveness under the IMF / World Bank Enhanced Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative.

Sovereign guarantees from developing country governments are sometimes given; historically this has occurred where the borrower is a public sector entity. Of the A$2.37 billion outstanding to sovereign counterparties (governments and government owned counterparties) A$150.4 million (approximately 6.3%) is covered by sovereign guarantees.

EFIC does not have any loans to privately owned companies which are covered by sovereign guarantees.

Refer 4 above.

None.

All countries that have outstanding debts to EFIC have contracted to meet debt service obligations, which will have to be accommodated within annual budget outlays.

Through its participation in the World Bank / IMF enhanced Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative and its membership of the Paris Club, the Australian Government is involved in multilateral assessments (typically prepared by the IMF and World Bank) of the financing needs of debtor countries on a case-by-case basis.

On existing debts to EFIC, there could be the potential for financial loss given that EFIC is reliant on the sovereign guarantor to service the debt obligation of the borrower. In terms of new transactions, EFIC may in some cases be unable to provide financial support without a sovereign guarantee.

EFIC’s assessment of a transaction – whether the destination of the export is a developing or developed country – primarily focuses on:

(a) The financial and technical capacity of all parties to the transaction;
(b) The macroeconomic environment of the destination country; and
(c) The possible environmental impacts of the project.

For any proposal that will represent a sovereign debt obligation for a developing country, EFIC assesses the macroeconomic position of the destination country to determine whether the debt could be serviced given the budgetary position of the host government.

Facilities provided by EFIC are frequently in support of capacity building in key infrastructure areas such as transport and telecommunications. As such, EFIC’s operations often assist developing countries to access goods and services that improve their standards of living.

Yes.

(a) EFIC’s Environment Policy details the basis on which transactions are screened and environmental and social issues relating to projects are assessed. The World Bank Group’s Pollution Prevention and Abatement Handbook forms the basis of Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) prepared in connection with prospective EFIC facilities that will have a significant impact on the environment.

(b) Where the content is deemed not commercially sensitive, information on EIAs is made available through the “Environment Policy” section of the EFIC website (http://www.efic.gov.au).

For proposals that will have a significant impact on the environment, EFIC will initiate a 45 day public consultation period in relation to an EIA (where the content is not deemed commercially sensitive).
(15) The precise Australian dollar value of debts outstanding to the Commonwealth varies daily as a result of debt service payments being received, movements in exchange rates, etc. However, by way of example, should all debts have been forgiven on 30 June 2003, the cost to the Commonwealth would have been, in part, A$2.56 billion (refer 3 above). In addition, there would likely have been significant unwinding / break costs and other expenses incurred as a result of EFIC’s funding arrangements.

**Environment: Cumberland Plain Woodlands**

(Question No. 2077)

Mr Kelvin Thomson asked the Minister for the Environment and Heritage, upon notice, on 24 June 2003:

(1) Is it the case that in 2001, the then Minister for the Environment and Heritage agreed to supplementary administrative guidelines of significance for the nationally endangered Cumberland Plain Woodlands ecological community and that since then, Environment Australia has been using these guidelines to advise the Minister on whether a proposed action requires an approval.

(2) Will the Minister publish these guidelines so that landowners across the Sydney region are able to decide whether their proposed action needs approval; if so, when; if not, why not.

Dr Kemp—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) In July 2001, the then Minister for the Environment and Heritage agreed with a general approach to determining whether an action is likely to have a significant impact on Cumberland Plain Woodlands. This approach was based on consideration of both patch size and condition and was consistent with advice on listed ecological communities contained in the EPBC Act Administrative Guidelines on Significance of July 2000. No specific guidelines on Cumberland Plain Woodlands have ever been developed.

(2) See answer to (1) above.

In order to further enhance assistance available to stakeholders, my department has commenced a review of the Administrative Guidelines on Significance and supplementary guidelines. The review which will include external consultation will consider, inter alia, whether specific guidelines on Cumberland Plain Woodlands are necessary.

**Centrelink: Pensioner Concession Cards**

(Question No. 2083)

Mr Murphy asked the Minister representing the Minister for Family and Community Services, upon notice, on 25 June 2003:

(1) Can the Minister confirm that Centrelink Pensioner Concession Cards show the cardholder’s full residential address; if so, why is the cardholder’s full residential address necessary on these cards.

(2) Will the Minister consider removing the cardholder’s address from Pensioner Concession Cards in the interests of all cardholders’ personal safety and security; if so, when; if not, why not.

Mr Anthony—The Minister for Family and Community Services has provided the following answer to the honourable member’s question:

(1) Yes, the Pensioner Concession Card does show the cardholder’s full residential address. Addresses are included on concession cards to make it as easy as possible for cardholders to access certain concessions provided by state, territory and local governments. Many of these providers choose to target concessions on services such as council rates, energy and water to local residents, and require verification of the cardholder’s address. Including addresses on cards makes this verification process quick and easy for both the concession provider, and the customer.
(2) Removing residential addresses from concession cards may limit the holder’s access to concessions provided by state, territory and local governments. However, I understand that some cardholders have concerns about security if their card is lost or stolen. To address this concern, customers already have the option of asking Centrelink to issue them with a card without an address. This can be done by cardholders either telephoning Centrelink on 13 2300, or visiting their local Centrelink Office.

**Aviation: Russian Transport Aircraft**

*(Question No. 2084)*

Mr Wilkie asked the Minister for Transport and Regional Services, upon notice, on 25 June 2003:

(1) Who is responsible for determining the security arrangements for the Defence chartered Russian transport aircraft airside at Perth International Airport.

(2) Between the Department of Defence and the subcontractor at Perth International Airport, how many intermediate chains of commercial or civilian management must be consulted in order to arrange security.

(3) Has the Chief Executive Officer of Westralia Airports Corporation ever authorised the carrying of weapons for the purpose of guarding Defence chartered Russian transport aircraft airside at Perth International Airport; if so, who carried out the armed protection task on each occasion.

(4) How many times have armed Australian Protective Service officers been asked to guard Defence chartered Russian transport aircraft airside at Perth International Airport.

(5) How many times have armed WA Police officers been asked to guard Defence chartered Russian transport aircraft airside at Perth International Airport.

(6) How many times have armed Australian Federal Police officers been asked to guard Defence chartered Russian transport aircraft airside at Perth International Airport.

(7) On what dates were armed guards authorised.

(8) Have SAS rocket launchers, machine guns, electronic surveillance equipment, bullet-proof clothing, specialist night-fighting equipment, specialist entry equipment designed for access to difficult or high buildings, or any other military equipment that would be highly useful for any terrorist group, ever transited Perth International Airport on board Defence chartered Russian transport aircraft.

(9) When explosives or ammunition are transferred on Defence chartered Russian aircraft utilising Perth International Airport have armed guards, specifically tasked to protect the Charter aircraft and not tasked with broader airport security, been provided to the aircraft airside.

(10) Have Defence chartered Russian transport aircraft loaded with specialist military equipment ever exited over Runway 20.

(11) Does the RAAF routinely provide guards and Alsatian dogs as security for Defence chartered Russian transport aircraft when these aircraft are loaded at RAAF Base Pearce.

Mr Anderson—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows: These questions fall into the portfolio of the Minister for Defence.
Veterans Affairs: Nominal Roll
(Question No. 2086)

Mr Brendan O’Connor asked the Minister for Veterans’ Affairs, upon notice, on 25 June 2003:

(1) Did the Determination of Warlike Service extend Operational and Qualifying Service in Vietnam from 12 January 1973 to 29 April 1975, inclusive, and provide VEA coverage to ADF personnel who served in Vietnam prior to the fall of Saigon; if so, why has the Nominal Roll of Vietnam Veterans not been updated, in line with the Determination, to include veterans who served during this period.

(2) Are veterans who qualify under the VEA for Warlike Service in the Active War Zone of Vietnam (Southern Zone), Vietnam Veterans.

(3) Are any veterans who qualify under the VEA for Warlike Service in the Active War Zone of Vietnam (Southern Zone) excluded from the Nominal Roll of Vietnam Veterans.

Mrs Vale—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) Yes, a determination of warlike service dated 23 December 1997 did extend coverage under the Veterans’ Entitlements Act 1986 for service rendered as a member of the Australian Defence Force in Vietnam (Southern Zone) during any period between 12 January 1973 and 29 April 1975 (both dates inclusive). The end date for service in South Vietnam, for the purposes of the Nominal Roll of Vietnam Veterans, has recently been extended to 29 April 1975. My Department is now including the names of those who served in this period on the Roll.

(2) and (3) There is no defined term “Vietnam Veteran”. For the purpose of the Nominal Roll of Vietnam Veterans, veterans who rendered operational or warlike service (as defined in the Veterans’ Entitlements Act 1986) in South Vietnam may be included on the Roll. The only exclusions are those veterans who do not wish their names to appear.

Education: Higher Education Contribution Scheme
(Question No. 2088)

Mr Brendan O’Connor asked the Minister for Education, Science and Training, upon notice, on 25 June 2003:

(1) For each year from 1996 to 2003 how many students in each of the following post codes: (a) 3023, (b) 3037, (c) 3337, (d) 3341, (e) 3429, (f) 3432, (g) 3435, (h) 3440, (i) 3444, (j) 3522, (k) 3764, (l) 3024, (m) 3063, (n) 3338, (o) 3427, (p) 3430, (q) 3433, (r) 3437, (s) 3441, (t) 3446, (u) 3756, (v) 3029, (w) 3335, (x) 3340, (y) 3428, (z) 3431, (aa) 3434, (ab) 3438, (ac) 3442, (ad) 3458 and (ae) 3762, have an outstanding or accumulated Higher Education Contribution Scheme (HECS) debt.

(2) How many not currently enrolled have an outstanding or accumulated HECS debt.

(3) What is the average HECS debt per person.

Dr Nelson—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) The answer to this question is provided at Attachment A.

(2) The Australian Taxation Office (ATO) only holds data on students who defer their HECS contributions. Of those students, there were 13,242 who had a HECS debt reported in Semester 2, 2002 but who did not have a HECS debt reported in Semester 1, 2003. This does not necessarily mean that these students were not enrolled in Semester 1, 2003.

(3) The average HECS debt per person resident in the specified postcodes at 30 June 2003 was $5,368. ATTACHMENT A
Table 1: Number of persons with a HECS debt by specified postcodes at 30 June from 1996 to 2003

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**Burke Electorate: Child-Care Centres**  
(Question No. 2089)

Mr Brendan O’Connor asked for Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, upon notice, on 25 June 2003:

1. How many community-based childcare centres are there in the electoral division of Burke.
2. What are their names and addresses.
3. How much funding did each centre receive in (a) 2001-2002, and (b) 2002-2003.
4. Have any childcare centres been overpaid; if so, how much money is each childcare centre being asked to repay.

Mr Anthony—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

1. There are 45 active community based childcare services in the electoral division of Burke. A breakdown of all active approved community based services is provided in the table below.
(2) The names and addresses of each active community based childcare service in the electoral division of Burke are listed in the table below.

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<td>Cobaw Family Day Care Scheme</td>
<td>SPONSOR ADDRESS: 47 High Street, Kyneton</td>
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<td>Darley Neighbourhood House Combined OSHC</td>
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<td>Mt Macedon After Care</td>
<td>641 Main Road, Mount Macedon</td>
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<td>Smith Street, Macedon</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kidzone (Romsey) Combined OSHC</td>
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<td>Diggers Rest Primary After School Care</td>
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<td>Hallets Way, Bacchus Marsh</td>
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<td>Centenary Avenue, Melton</td>
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<td>Bacchus Marsh Primary Combined OSHC</td>
<td>Lederland Street, Bacchus Marsh</td>
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<tr>
<td>Melton Shire Council Out of School Hours Service – ASP</td>
<td>Exford Road, Melton</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kismet Park Primary Combined OSHC</td>
<td>McEwan Drive, Sunbury</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kidzone (Romsey) Combined OSHC (555012019V)</td>
<td>Romsey Primary School, Lot 7, Mitchell Court, Romsey</td>
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</table>
Riddells Creek Primary Combined OSHC (555013062V)  Main Road, Riddells Creek  BSC
Darley Neighbourhood House Combined OSHC  Nelson Street, Bacchus Marsh  BSC
Bacchus Marsh Primary Combined OSHC (555007852K)  Lederderg Street, Bacchus Marsh  BSC
Pentland Primary Combined OSHC  Hallets Way, Bacchus Marsh  BSC
Sunbury West Primary Combined OSHC (555019451)  Elizabeth Drive, Sunbury  BSC
Deer Park North Primary Before Care  Mawson Avenue, Deer Park  BSC
The Brookside Learning Centre Combined OSHC  Federation Way, Caroline Springs  BSC
Melton Shire Council Before School Care  Exford Road, Melton  BSC
Goonawarra Primary Before Care  Gullane Drive, Sunbury  BSC
Kismet Park Primary Combined OSHC  McEwan Drive, Sunbury  BSC
Sunbury Leisure Centre Vacation Care  Elizabeth Drive, Sunbury  VAC
The Brookside Learning Centre Vacation Care  Federation Way, Caroline Springs  VAC
Mowbray College Vacation Care Program  Centenary Avenue, Melton  VAC
Melton Shire Council Vacation Care  Exford Road, Melton  VAC
Bacchus Marsh YMCA Holiday Program  5-15 Labilliere Street, Bacchus Marsh  VAC
Deer Park North Primary Vacation Care  Mawson Avenue, Deer Park  VAC
Sunbury Heights Vacation Care  Charter Road East, Sunbury  VAC
Macedon Ranges Shire Vacation Care  Fisher Street, Gisborne  VAC
Darley Neighbourhood House Vacation Care  Nelson Street, Bacchus Marsh  VAC

Note: CLD – Community based long day care, FDC – Family Day Care, ASC – After School Care, BSC – Before School Care, VAC – Vacation Care.

The sum of funding received by active community based child care services in the electoral division of Burke for (i) 2001-02 and (ii) 2002-03 is listed in the table below. The sum of funding includes funding paid as Operational Subsidy, Special Needs Subsidy, JET payments, Establishment Grants and Block Grant Assistance (transitional assistance). These amounts do not include Child Care Benefit or Childcare Assistance as these amounts are notionally paid to families rather than to services although aggregated amounts are paid to services. Each service must apply for the noted subsidies and grants, and meet specific eligibility criteria.
<table>
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<tr>
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<td>Kismet Park Primary Combined OSHC</td>
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<td>The Brookside Learning Centre Vacation Care</td>
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<td>Mowbray College Vacation Care Program</td>
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<td>Sunbury Heights Vacation Care</td>
<td>VAC</td>
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</table>
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Macedon Ranges Shire Vacation Care | VAC | $6 890.98 | $5 354.14  
Darley Neighbourhood House Vacation Care | VAC | - | $892.25  

Note: CLD – Community based long day care, FDC – Family Day Care, ASC – After School Care, BSC – Before School Care, VAC – Vacation Care.

(4) Child Care Benefit (CCB) is paid in advance to services on behalf of eligible families to enable services to reduce the child care fees of those families. CCB is paid on an ongoing advance/acquit basis. No debts or overpayments are raised as part of this ongoing process.

**Taxation: Family Payments**  
(Question No. 2091)

Mr Brendan O’Connor asked the Minister representing the Minister for Family and Community Services, upon notice, on 25 June 2003:

1. For the electoral division of Burke, how many families and/or individuals currently have debts outstanding to the Commonwealth due to overpayment of Family Tax Benefit.
2. How many of these have been referred to Debt Collectors.
3. In each of the financial years 2001-2002 and 2002-2003, have any families or individuals elected to repay their debts by credit card; if so, (a) how many families and/or individuals did so and (b) what was the (i) average amount paid per family/individual by credit card and (ii) the total amount paid by credit card.

Mr Anthony—The Minister for Family and Community Services has provided the following answer to the honourable member’s question:

1. For the electoral division of Burke, as at 31 May 2003 there are 2,987 families that have a debt outstanding to the Commonwealth due to overpayment of Family Tax Benefit.
2. As at 31 May 2003 seven of these debts are under referral to the Mercantile Agency contracted by Centrelink.
3. The detailed information required to answer the honourable member’s question is not readily available in consolidated form. I do not consider it appropriate for the expenditure of resources and effort that would be involved in collecting and assembling information for the sole purpose of answering questions of this nature.

**Motor Vehicles: ECOmmodore**  
(Question No. 2108)

Mr Murphy asked the Minister for Industry, Tourism and Resources, upon notice, on 26 June 2003:

1. What has been the outcome of the trial of the hybrid ECOmmodore which was constructed as a joint industry-government project by the CSIRO and General Motors Holden in 2000?
2. What was the total cost of this project and what was the total contributed by the Commonwealth?
3. Is it the case that the ECOmmodore uses 50% less fuel than a conventional vehicle of the same size and produces the same performance as a standard 3.8 litre V6 from a four-cylinder motor?
4. Is the Minister able to say how much the demand for petroleum fuels would be reduced if the Government encouraged or required vehicle manufacturers to produce fuel-efficient vehicles like the ECOmmodore; if not, why not?
(5) Has he seen a report by the CSIRO titled Energy Outlook to 2020, which indicates that there are no plans to produce vehicles of this type in Australia?

(6) Does the Government support the production of vehicles of this type in Australia; if so, why; if not, why not?

(7) Is the Minister able to say when Australian production of vehicles with hybrid petrol-electric motors will begin?

Mr Hockey—The Acting Minister for Industry, Tourism and Resources has provided the following answer to the honourable member’s questions:

(1) The ECOmodore was a ‘learning platform’ to give scientists and engineers the opportunity to explore new and innovative technologies such as power-train strategies, control systems and energy storage systems. These technologies may be relevant to future hybrid vehicles.

(2) I understand that the total contribution by the CSIRO to the ECOmmodore project was approximately $900,000. I do not know the Holden contribution.

(3) One of the design targets, based on engineering modelling, was for a vehicle that used 50% less fuel when compared to a standard 3.8 litre V6 Commodore. Actual fuel consumption figures vary considerably, and are drive cycle dependant.

(4) No, because of the many inter-related factors involved. These include the percentage of the current car fleet replaced by such a vehicle, the timescale over which this would occur, the make-up of the entire current vehicle fleet, and the annual usage for the various vehicle types.


(6) The Government supports the production of vehicles that incorporate modern fuel-saving technologies. The Government’s Automotive Competitiveness and Investment Scheme (ACIS) is directed towards encouraging new investment and innovation in the automotive industry. A new feature of this scheme will be a $150 million R&D fund specifically for vehicle manufacturers investing new and innovative technologies. The decision to produce hybrid vehicles in Australia is a commercial decision for vehicle manufacturers.

(7) No. The Government is unable to pre-empt the decisions made by commercial vehicle manufacturers regarding the Australian production of such cars.

Foreign Affairs: Burma (Question No. 2130)

Mr Rudd asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs, upon notice, on 26 June 2003:

(1) Does he continue to stand by the Government’s policy of “constructive engagement” with the Burmese regime, including the ongoing program of ‘human rights training’ in Burma.

(2) Can he explain what the key performance indicators are for the Government’s policy of “constructive engagement” with the Burmese regime.

(3) Is he aware that on 16 June 2003 the European Union expanded its sanctions against the Burmese regime, including expanding the list of individuals to be subjected to a visa ban and assets freeze.

(4) Is he aware that the European Union also decided to strip Burma of its trade privileges.

(5) Is he aware that Japan has indicated that it will cut off aid to Burma or reconsider its policy of engagement unless Aung San Suu Kyi is quickly released.

(6) Can he advise whether there is to be a review of the Government’s “constructive engagement” policy with the Burmese regime.
Can he advise whether or not he is considering implementing sanctions against the Burmese regime.

Mr Downer—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) The Government’s approach to relations with Burma is grounded in an assessment of the national interest, and takes into account Burma’s location in the South-East Asian region and its membership of the Association of South-East Asian Nations; Burma’s role as a major source of illegal drugs entering Australia; the serious humanitarian problems affecting Burma’s population, in particular vulnerable groups such as women and children; and the lack of respect for human rights in Burma. We will continue to use all opportunities to call for progress in political reconciliation, democratic reform and greater respect for human rights. Activities under the Government’s Human Rights Initiative have been deferred; nevertheless, we will continue to seek opportunities to promote awareness, and observance, of internationally-respected human rights standards in Burma. We will continue to provide assistance aimed at alleviating the humanitarian situation in Burma.

(2) Along with other members of the international community, Australia wishes to see a Burma which is stable, democratic and prosperous, where human rights are respected. As I have said publicly, over recent years no single approach appears to have succeeded in promoting this objective.

(3) Yes.

(4) Yes.

(5) Japan decided not to undertake new assistance projects to Burma as a response to Aung San Suu Kyi’s detention.

(6) The Government monitors and assesses policy settings on an ongoing basis.

(7) The Government considers that sanctions against Burma would be ineffective. Australia’s trade and investment with Burma is extremely limited. Our share of Burma’s total exports is four tenths of one percent. The US and EU have sanctions, but these have achieved nothing. Since 1998, Australia has had in place a ban on defence exports to Burma and travel restrictions on senior SPDC figures. These remain in place.