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SITTING DAYS—2003

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- **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, the Hon. Bruce Craig Scott, the Hon.
Dick Godfrey Harry Adams, Mr Frank William Mossfield AM, the 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

The Nationals
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—Ms Jennifer Louise Macklin MP
Chief Opposition Whip—The Hon. Janice Ann Crosio MBE MP
Opposition Whips—Mr Michael Danby 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, AM, QC</td>
<td>Tangney, WA</td>
<td>LP</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; NATS—The Nationals;
Ind—Independent; CLP—Country Liberal Party; AG—Australian Greens

Heads of Parliamentary Departments
Clerk of the Senate—H. Evans
Clerk of the House of Representatives—I.C. Harris
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

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

(The above ministers constitute the cabinet)
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<td>Senator the Hon. Christopher Martin Ellison</td>
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<td>Minister for Fisheries, Forestry and Conservation</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Ian Douglas Macdonald</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for the Arts and Sport</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Charles Roderick Kemp</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Small Business and Tourism</td>
<td>The Hon. Joseph Benedict Hockey MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Science and Deputy Leader of the House</td>
<td>The Hon. Peter John McGauran MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Local Government, Territories and Roads and Manager of Government Business in the Senate</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Ian Campbell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Children and Youth Affairs</td>
<td>The Hon. Lawrence James Anthony MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Employment Services and Minister Assisting the Minister for Defence</td>
<td>The Hon. Malcolm Thomas Brough MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Minister of State</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Eric Abetz</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Veterans’ Affairs</td>
<td>The Hon. Danna Sue Vale MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Revenue and Assistant Treasurer</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Helen Lloyd Coonan</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Ageing</td>
<td>The Hon. Julie Isabel Bishop MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister</td>
<td>The Hon. Gary Douglas Hardgrave MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister</td>
<td>The Hon. Jacqueline Marie Kelly MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Transport and Regional Services</td>
<td>The Hon. De-Anne Margaret Kelly</td>
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<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Trade</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasurer</td>
<td>The Hon. Ross Alexander Cameron MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Foreign Affairs</td>
<td>The Hon. Christine Ann Gallus MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Defence</td>
<td>The Hon. Frances Esther Bailey MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for the Environment and Heritage</td>
<td>The Hon. Dr Sharman Nancy Stone MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Finance and Administration</td>
<td>The Hon. Peter Neil Slipper MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Judith Mary Troeth</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Family and Community Services</td>
<td>The Hon. Christopher Maurice Pyne</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Health and Ageing</td>
<td>The Hon. Patricia Mary Worth MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Industry, Tourism and Resources</td>
<td>The Hon. Warren George Entsch MP</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<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 Minister for Employment, Education and Training and Science</td>
<td>Jennifer Louise Macklin MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leader of the Opposition in the Senate, Shadow Special Minister of State and Shadow Minister for Home Affairs</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. John Philip Faulkner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Senate and Shadow Minister for Trade, Corporate Governance, Financial Services and Small Business</td>
<td>Senator Stephen Michael Conroy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Employment Services and Training</td>
<td>Anthony Norman Albanese MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Veterans’ Affairs and Shadow Minister for Customs</td>
<td>Senator Thomas Mark Bishop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Children and Youth</td>
<td>Senator Jacinta Mary Ann Collins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Industry, Innovation, Science and Research and Shadow Minister for the Public Service</td>
<td>Senator Kim John Carr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Assistant Treasurer</td>
<td>David Alexander Cox MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Ageing and Seniors, Assisting the Shadow Minister for Disabilities</td>
<td>Annette Louise Ellis MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Workplace Relations</td>
<td>Craig Anthony Emerson MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Defence</td>
<td>Senator Christopher Vaughan Evans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs</td>
<td>Laurence Donald Thomas Ferguson MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Urban and Regional Development and Shadow Minister for Transport and Infrastructure</td>
<td>Martin John Ferguson MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Resources and Shadow Minister for Tourism</td>
<td>Joel Andrew Fitzgibbon MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Health and Deputy Manager of Opposition Business</td>
<td>Julia Eileen Gillard MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Consumer Protection and Consumer Health</td>
<td>Alan Peter Griffin MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Treasurer and Manager of Opposition Business</td>
<td>Mark William Latham MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Information Technology, Shadow Minister for Sport and Shadow Minister for the Arts</td>
<td>Senator Kate Alexandra Lundy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Attorney-General and Shadow Minister for Justice and Community Security</td>
<td>Robert Bruce McClelland MP</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
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Shadow Minister for Cabinet and Finance and
Shadow Minister for Reconciliation and
Indigenous Affairs  Robert Francis McMullan MP

Shadow Minister for Heritage and Territories  Daryl Melham MP

Shadow Minister for Primary Industries  Senator Kerry William Kelso O’Brien

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

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

Shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs  Kevin Michael Rudd MP

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

Shadow Minister for Family and Community
Services  Wayne Maxwell Swan MP

Shadow Minister for Communications  Lindsay James Tanner MP

Shadow Minister for Sustainability and the
Environment  Kelvin John Thomson MP

Parliamentary Secretary (Manufacturing
Industries)  Senator George Campbell

Parliamentary Secretary (Defence)  The Hon. Graham John Edwards MP

Parliamentary Secretary (Family and Community
Services)  Senator Michael George Forshaw

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

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

Parliamentary Secretary (Leader of the
Opposition)  John Paul Murphy MP

Parliamentary Secretary (Communications)  Michelle Anne O’Byrne MP

Parliamentary Secretary (Primary Industries)  Peter Sid Sidebottom MP

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

Parliamentary Secretary (Regional Development,
Transport, Infrastructure and Tourism)  Christian John Zahra MP
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<td>Sid Sidebottom MP</td>
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<td>Michelle O’Byrne MP</td>
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<tr>
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Mr BRUCE SCOTT (Maranoa) (12.31 p.m.)—On behalf of the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade, I present the committee’s report, entitled Defence Sub Committee visit to RAAF Williamtown, Darwin Establishments, East Timor and RAAF Tindal, 14 to 17 July 2003.

Ordered that the report be printed.

Mr BRUCE SCOTT—by leave—The visit provided an excellent opportunity for members of the subcommittee to familiarise themselves with the Australian Defence Force establishments situated on RAAF Base Williamtown and the various Defence establishments in the Darwin area, in particular Northern Command—NORCOM—and the North West Mobile Force—NORFORCE.

During the visit to RAAF Williamtown, the subcommittee was briefed on the role and operation of the ADF Warfare Centre and the Surveillance Control Group. Number 381 Expeditionary Combat Support Squadron, based at RAAF Williamtown, has assisted in a range of overseas operations, including the recent war in Iraq. As part of the visit to Defence facilities in Darwin, the subcommittee was briefed on the role and operation of Headquarters Northern Command—NORCOM—and the role of NORFORCE in conducting surveillance operations in remote parts of Northern Australia. NORFORCE comprises about 60 per cent of Indigenous Australians, who perform a vital and effective role in operating in and providing surveillance in some of the harshest environments in Australia.

On Wednesday, 16 July, the subcommittee visited East Timor where, at the time, there were just under 1,000 ADF personnel, who formed Australian Battalion Group Rotation Eight situated in Forward Operating Base Moleana and in the Bobonaro District. The Australian contingent is part of Operation Citadel, the Australian contribution to the United Nations Mission of Support in East Timor. The ADF forces operating in East Timor perform under arduous conditions and are a credit to Australia. The subcommittee visited the forward operating bases at Moleana, Maliana and Gleno. On Thursday, 17 July, the final day of the visit program, the subcommittee visited RAAF Tindal and was briefed on the role and operations of 322 Combat Support Wing and 75 Squadron. RAAF FA18 Hornets from 75 Squadron were involved in operations in the war in Iraq and received praise for their professionalism and skill.

In conclusion, Australian Defence Force personnel, operating in a range of diverse environments, continue to demonstrate professionalism, dedication and expertise. I commend the report to the House.

Mr PRICE (Chifley) (12.34 p.m.)—I am pleased to support the comments of the honourable member for Maranoa, the Chair of the Defence Subcommittee of the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade. I think one of the good things about the Defence Subcommittee is that, from time to time, it does go on visits to seek and meet ADF personnel on their home bases. It is a procedure that has much to commend it. Certainly it is an invaluable opportunity for members of the subcommittee to learn first-hand about what is being done and, in a formal way, elicit what may or
may not be working as well as it might. This trip was no exception.

The Defence Subcommittee has always sought to visit deployed ADF personnel wherever they have been. If my memory serves me correctly, the trip to East Timor is the third visit that the Defence Subcommittee has made. If it is good enough for serving men and women to serve the country overseas in a variety of operations, then it ought to be appropriate for members of parliament to go and observe their successes.

On every visit to East Timor it is always impressive to see Australians in operation—not only their professionalism in carrying out the work that they are trained to do but also the way in which they interact with the locals. This visit was no exception. For my own part, I do have some concern about the drawdown of Australian troops—from roughly 1,000 to something like 300 in its area of operation and, all over, some 400. Notwithstanding the drawdown, there has been a one-third increase in the area of responsibility. The drawdown is based on the presumption of the East Timorese being able to take over some of the functions of the peacekeeping forces in that country. For my part, I certainly believe that the future security of East Timor very much rests in developing good relations with Indonesia, and that will be a vital part of its future.

The chairman of the subcommittee mentioned NORFORCE and the reconnaissance units attached to it, some 60 per cent of whose members are Indigenous. It is a feature of all our reserve reconnaissance units that they are largely made up of Indigenous members who make an outstanding contribution to the ADF. We would be at a loss without the competence of those reconnaissance units. I commend this report of the Defence Subcommittee to the House and trust that all honourable members will have an opportunity to read the report.

The SPEAKER—Does the member for Maranoa wish to move a motion in connection with the report to enable it to be debated on a future occasion?

Mr BRUCE SCOTT (Maranoa) (12.38 p.m.)—I move:

That the House take note of the report.

I seek leave to continue my remarks later.

Leave granted.

The SPEAKER—In accordance with standing order 102B, the debate is adjourned. The resumption of the debate will be made an order of the day for the next sitting and the member will have leave to continue speaking when the debate is resumed.

Economics, Finance and Public Administration Committee Report

Mr HAWKER (Wannon) (12.39 p.m.)—On behalf of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Economics, Finance and Public Administration, I present the report of the committee entitled Rates and taxes: a fair share for responsible local government, together with the minutes of proceedings.

Ordered that the report be printed.

Mr HAWKER—The inquiry into local government and cost shifting has revealed some stark and disturbing realities. The most immediate and obvious is that cost shifting is largely a symptom of a growing crisis in Australian governance. Our system of federalism is fracturing under the weight of duplication and coordination costs between the three levels of government, and it is costing the Australian community around $20 billion a year. This cannot continue if we are to remain competitive internationally. I hope that this report marks the beginning of a new re-
form of governance and, consequently, financial arrangements in Australia.

All levels of government have engaged in cost shifting in some form or another and have done so for many years, particularly the states, but it appears to have become more frequent since changes were made to the local government acts in the states. The inquiry heard that state governments are now responsible for cost shifts onto local government of between $500 million and $1 billion a year. Not only are state governments gaining through the GST; they also cost shift and then continue to call on the federal government for more for service delivery arrangements. That is one reason that the report recommends that consideration be given to extending the powers of the Australian National Audit Office to examine the spending by states of federal specific-purpose payments through to local government.

Cost shifting takes many forms. In Victoria, revenue denial is an issue—that is, the failure of the state government to index statutory fees and charges which, in one case, amounted to more than 15 per cent of a city council’s revenue. Rate capping, which is peculiar to New South Wales, is a major form of revenue denial. However, local government is one common feature of all regions, and it was clear to the committee that federal agencies would do well to make use of its local knowledge and experience when formulating policies and programs.

One disturbing picture highlighted was the state of the infrastructure managed by local governments. The Department of Transport and Regional Services assesses the value of local roads at about $75 billion and an annual local road spending shortfall of around $630 million. Federal investment through the Roads to Recovery program has been vital, and it was disappointing to hear that one state reduced its local road funding in response to the Roads to Recovery program. Such an attitude undermines what should be a collaborative effort to address a very serious problem.

Another stark reality is the widening gap between urban and rural councils. The committee heard from many innovative, enterprising and hardworking councils, from remote to urban and from small to large. While some have managed—albeit with increasing difficulty, in the face of widespread cost shifting, revenue denial and increasing community demands—others, particularly in rural and remote areas, struggle to survive. In light of this compelling evidence, the report recommends a new funding approach based on equalisation principles.

It is pleasing to note that both sides of the House supported the 1974 local government grants bill, which set out to reduce inequalities between local governments. Today’s unanimous report also supports its original intention through the proposed new funding arrangements. These arrangements will result in a national model consistent across all local governments and will be distributed direct to local governments from the federal government in an effort to increase transparency and cut duplication, as well as recognise the capacity of a community to pay. In the quest to get the funding right between state and local governments, the committee concluded that a tripartite intergovernmental agreement should be considered and that the federal Treasurer’s responsibility to manage financial relations with the states should be extended to include local government. This would help to ensure that cost shifting between the spheres of government is dealt with.

The roles and responsibilities of local government are a vexed issue as they differ between councils and states, representing the extreme diversity of our demographic, geo-
graphic, cultural, social, economic and environmental landscape. I think it is time that we as a nation focused on the complementarity of these differences. Already, some state governments have forged fruitful partnerships with local government; an initiative which it is hoped will include the federal government where appropriate to help achieve better outcomes. Identifying who does what and who can do it best is for the three levels of government to sort out. That is why the committee recommended a summit on intergovernmental relations to be hosted by COAG in 2005.

The committee sincerely hopes that all governments will support the proposed changes as a genuine attempt to forge a new, fairer funding partnership between the three spheres of government which will better serve all Australians wherever they live. In conclusion, I thank all members of the committee for the hard work they put in, particularly my deputy, the member for Chisholm, and the members of the secretariat—Susan Cardell and Vanessa Crimmins, in particular. I commend the report to the House.

Ms BURKE (Chisholm) (12.44 p.m.)—Standing committees of the parliament demonstrate to the public that the parliament, and not merely executive government, has a legitimate role to play in the good governance of our country. So it was quite disturbing and indeed distressing at the commencement of this inquiry to be presented with such a blatantly political reference—a reference designed to find fault and blame with all Labor state governments and a federal inquiry with no federal reference. But members of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Economics, Finance and Public Administration rose above party politics and the blatant political terms of reference and behaved as a committee should. Instead of treating this as a witch-hunt to track down the most offensive state government, we looked at a genuine grievance that inflicts local government—one which, from all the evidence received, is hampering local government’s ability to provide services to the communities we represent—and attempted to come up with solutions to these issues. It is, therefore, especially pleasing to be here today tabling the report entitled Rates and taxes: a fair share for responsible local government. This is a consensus report which has risen above party politics to look at an issue and come up with what is a radical reform.

A new funding model for local government is the result of our inquiry into cost shifting. At the outset this may look absurd and in some respect does not resolve issues of cost shifting, but that is where the evidence led us. We believe we are tabling today a comprehensive report with sound suggestions for a brave government to implement. I am fully aware that not all quarters will welcome the recommendations, but the premise of the committee was not just to provide a stock standard political resolve but also to chart a genuine way forward to attempt to overcome a perennial problem faced by consecutive governments since 1974 when federal funding was first introduced. In some ways it was distressing to look at the 1974 Self report into local government funding and see that we are again tackling the same issue.

We could have taken an easy approach and said, ‘Yes, here is a slice of the GST revenue,’ but that would have been the kiss of death to any genuine reform. More money alone is not the answer; certainty and transparency of funding are certainly the way forward. Moving from a population base to a needs base is the way to go, but a slice of GST would have had little chance of making it through the minefield of attempting another IGA. I cannot see either the Treasurer or any premier wanting to open that Pan-
dora’s box, and local government would have been sadly disappointed when they discovered there was no massive GST windfall to carve out.

Instead we recommend that we move to a needs based model in accordance with a national formula to be developed by the Commonwealth Grants Commission in consultation with local, state and federal government—with the valuable data collected by local grants commissions over many years providing the basis of this formula. The funding will be direct from the federal government to local government, remain untied, delivered in one pool, include weighted measures for Indigenous communities and ensure appropriate acquittal mechanisms are in place. As I say, this is a radical step forward but one which should help address the imbalance of council funding we have seen in our numerous visits across the countryside.

Having now spent more hours than I care to in planes which seemed to get smaller and smaller, and ventured into areas where even tarmacs fear to tread, I can attest that there is a genuine perceived impost placed on local governments from all spheres of government. I note with interest the Chair’s foreword—where, under my guard, he has gotten his desire and placed the blame for all of this on the shoulders of state governments. I, in my good grace, will let this go through to the keeper. The reality is that we could never quantify the amount of cost shifting or pinpoint where or how this cost shifting arose, but we accept that it does happen.

I think this point was best summed up by the CEO of Monash Council, in my electorate of Chisholm, who said:

My view is we should draw the line on cost shifting. We are there, and no-one is going to retrospectively go back and fix any problems. We have funded 80 per cent of libraries and we will continue to fund 80 per cent of libraries. Let us get on with it. How we fund it is the real issue.

In its supplementary submission to the inquiry, ALGA stated:

... The national interest is best served when the three spheres of government work together to ensure taxpayers’ funds are spent efficiently and effectively to achieve specified outcomes.

This is a desirable end, but to actually define and impose the role of local government on councils would not be of benefit to the communities they serve and would be impossible, given the divergence in size of councils and the huge difference in the services they provide.

There are 721 local government bodies, including 97 Indigenous communities. The average population of a council is 26,400 but 50 per cent have fewer than 6,490 residents. Brisbane alone has 899,604 residents. The Shire of East Pilbara has the largest area, covering 378,533 square kilometres. The delightful Shire of Peppermint Grove covers just two square kilometres. Some local councils are responsible for water and sewerage, others for jetties and airports. Others run nursing homes and child-care centres. Local government is what local government believes its community expects it to be. The Tamworth council’s submission concluded:

The increasing expectations of the community and the willingness of both State and Federal Governments to require more of Local Government without a corresponding increase in funding has resulted in a situation where Councils can no longer meet either of these expectations.

 Councils are constantly placed in a no-win situation, with the resource base strictly controlled and the cost base in free flight.

It is a situation that cannot be allowed to continue.
The CEO of the Shire of Yalgoo summed it up best for most councils:

Quite frankly, local government in our region is the last man standing.

The issue of cost shifting needs to be addressed or more funding will simply be swallowed by cost shifting. Recommendation No. 6 in the report, in conjunction with recommendation No. 17, should go some way to resolving this impost on councils. Councils need to also take responsibility and to manage community expectations. In my last breath, I thank everybody who made presentations and appeared before the committee—especially the likes of the CEO of Diamantina shire, who drove seven hours to meet with us.

The SPEAKER—Does the member for Wannon wish to move a motion in connection with the report to enable it to be debated on a future occasion?

Mr HAWKER (Wannon) (12.49 p.m.)—I move:

That the House take note of the report.

I seek leave to continue my remarks later.

Leave granted.

The SPEAKER—In accordance with standing order 102B, the debate is adjourned. The resumption of the debate will be made an order of the day for the next sitting and the member will have leave to continue speaking when the debate is resumed.

National Capital and External Territories Committee

The SPEAKER (12.50 p.m.)—I inform the House that the Joint Standing Committee on the National Capital and External Territories will not be presenting its two reports at this sitting. The order of precedence of remaining committee and delegation reports and private members’ business notices, as determined by the selection committee’s report adopted by the House on 4 November 2003, remains unchanged.

BUSINESS

Rearrangement

Ms WORTH (Adelaide—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Health and Ageing) (12.51 p.m.)—by leave—I move:

That so much of the standing and sessional orders be suspended as would allow the resumption of the debate on the motion to take note of the Standing Committee on Procedure’s report presented at this sitting to be:

(a) adjourned to a later hour this day, and
(b) the order of the day to be called on at a later hour this day.

Question agreed to.

Procedure Committee: Report

Mrs MAY (McPherson) (12.52 p.m.)—On behalf of the Standing Committee on Procedure, I present the committee’s report entitled Revised Standing Orders—the standing orders of the House of Representatives as last amended on 6 February 2003, redrafted and reorganised—together with the minutes of proceedings.

Ordered that the report be printed.

Mrs MAY—This report contains and recommends a completely revised set of standing orders for the House of Representatives. In October 1999, in its report It’s your House: Community involvement in the procedures and practices of the House of Representatives and its committees, the Procedure Committee recommended that the standing orders be ‘restructured and rewritten to make them more logical, intelligible and readable’, and that the Clerk of the House prepare a draft for the committee’s consideration. In response to this recommendation, the Clerk prepared a draft ‘proposed standing orders’ for consideration by the committee. The committee tabled the draft as a discussion
paper in September 2002, to give members and other interested parties the opportunity to have input into the review. The Procedure Committee has now completed its review of the proposed standing orders and has pleasure in presenting its revised draft to the House.

The power the House has to set its own rules is given by the Constitution. Section 50 states:

Each House of the Parliament may make rules and orders with respect to—

(ii) The order and conduct of its business and proceedings ...

However, establishing and reforming the standing orders of the House has historically been a laborious process. In 1901, soon after the creation of the new Commonwealth parliament, the House adopted temporary standing orders as a provisional measure and charged the Standing Orders Committee—which was the predecessor of the Procedure Committee—with the task of drafting a permanent set. It is now over 100 years since the first report of the House Standing Orders Committee. That report in 1902, just like this report, recommended the adoption of a set of standing orders; yet that final adoption did not occur until 1950. I really hope that the report I am presenting here today does not take as long to be implemented.

I will not go into the detail of the story of the provisional standing orders, which were based on the rules of 19th century colonial legislatures—with a strong South Australian influence. I was a little surprised to learn that the provisional standing orders of the House of Representatives had originally been drafted by the first Clerk of the Senate, who had come from the South Australian Legislative Council. In association with Prime Minister Barton, he drew up almost identical drafts for the two houses. The Senate rejected their own clerk’s draft and instead adopted temporarily the standing orders of the South Australian House of Assembly, the lower house.

While the Senate adopted its own permanent standing orders in 1903, successive drafts by the House Standing Orders Committee over the next 45 years or so ‘lapsed into a sea of indifference’, as one observer put it. It seems that members had become familiar with the temporary rules and lacked enthusiasm to discard them in favour of something new. However, the House did manage to find time to amend the temporary orders by including new provisions for closures, time limits on speeches, and the guillotine. Even when the permanent standing orders were eventually adopted they were basically the temporary ones with some amendments. A completely new set of standing orders that the House could well and truly call its own had to wait until 1963, when they were comprehensively reviewed, revised and renumbered.

At the start of the 21st century it is time for a second comprehensive review. Times have changed, language has changed and parliamentary procedures have changed. The 1963 standing orders—those in force now—have been amended in parts over the years. Many have been omitted, leaving suggestive remnant headings. There are obsolete provisions that now are not used; apparently some have never been used. In recent years a few sections of the existing orders were rewritten and modernised in language, leading to inconsistencies with the rest of the text. Some standing orders are not exactly clearly written; members—and I suspected sometimes even our clerks—are not sure what they mean. In recent years—for well over 10 years, in fact—legislative drafters have sought to write in plain English the laws we debate here in this chamber. The time has come for our own rules—that is, the standing orders—to also be in plain English.
In passing, I note that the Senate carried out a similar review of its standing orders some time ago. Its revised standing orders came into effect in 1990. The Procedure Committee’s goal in the current exercise was to keep the intention of each standing order but make the meaning clearly understandable and the language more modern—as I have just said, for it to be expressed in plain English. The revised standing orders follow a more logical order. To make the document more user friendly, new features include cross-references to related standing orders and, where appropriate, where the standing orders reflect constitutional requirements, to the Constitution. We now have a section with definitions and an enlarged section on the application and interpretation of the standing orders. Layout and design have been improved and there is a much better index.

This was partly a housekeeping exercise. Obsolete provisions have been omitted—and I must say that the committee took pains to satisfy itself that the so-called obsolete provisions were, in fact, unnecessary. Examples of omitted provisions include the standing orders relating to instructions to the Committee of the Whole, which no longer exists. However, while there are omissions, there are no additions. I must stress this point: the purpose of this revision was to make the existing rules easier to read and comprehend. This report does not alter the effect of the current standing orders or change existing practice. While this revision does not change existing practice, there are several provisions of the existing orders that individual members of the committee have concerns about and suggestions for change. However, we decided that such matters should be addressed separately and not as part of this report.

This was a massive task, especially as the committee was pursuing other inquiries at the same time. Going through each standing order was an educative process for members of the committee—it certainly was for me. All members approached this task in a completely bipartisan manner but, of course, from different points of view, and we had some very interesting discussions. To the deputy chair—the member for Chifley—and all the committee members, I express my sincere thanks for the time and commitment they gave to this review. To achieve today’s outcome often meant all of us spending a long time in committee meetings in both Canberra and Sydney.

I also thank the committee secretariat for the support it provided to this process and for its work in preparing the final document for publication. In particular, I thank Judy Middlebrook and Peter Fowler for their patience, understanding and good humour, particularly during the numerous debates the committee had on the English language. I also acknowledge the huge amount of work put into the original draft by the Clerk’s department. It was an excellent draft; however, I think we can honestly claim to have improved it. From a member’s point of view, it is now even more user friendly. The committee recommends that these revised standing orders be adopted by the House and hopes they can come into effect in the next parliament. I commend the report to the House.

Mr PRICE (Chifley) (1.00 p.m.)—I rise to support the report of the Standing Committee on Procedure, Revised standing orders. This report contains and recommends a completely revised set of standing orders for the House of Representatives. I wish to thank the Selection Committee and the Leader of the House for facilitating the tabling of the report. This is the fourth report of the committee in this parliament, and two further reports are to be tabled next Monday. If nothing else, the Procedure Committee is at least productive. As the chair, the member for McPherson, has indicated, in its 1999 report,
It's your House: community involvement in procedures and practices of the House of Representatives and its committees, the Procedure Committee recommended that the standing orders be restructured and rewritten to make them more logical, intelligible and readable and that the Clerk of the House prepare a draft for the committee’s consideration. Mr Speaker, you accepted this and other recommendations of the committee. I am pleased to say that I was a member of the committee at the time.

The Clerk prepared draft proposed standing orders for consideration by the committee. As the chair has mentioned, it was a significant task, and I would like to compliment Claressa Surtees for her contribution to that task. It is pleasing that she is in the House at the moment. The committee tabled the Clerk’s draft as a discussion paper in September 2002 to give members and other interested parties the opportunity to have an input into the review. I am pleased to say that the Procedure Committee’s review of the proposed standing orders has now been completed. Without detracting from the Clerk’s draft standing orders, the committee has nevertheless made significant changes, which can be determined from a comparison between the two documents. This report represents the first revision of standing orders for 40 years and the second since standing orders were permanently adopted in 1950.

As the chair has pointed out, the Constitution grants both houses the power to set their own conventions. Section 50 states:

Each House of the Parliament may make rules and orders with respect to ... the order and conduct of its business and proceedings ...

Provisional standing orders for the House were first drafted by E.G. Blackmore, Clerk of the South Australian Legislative Council, clerk of the constitutional convention in Adelaide, Sydney and Melbourne in 1897-98 and the first Clerk of the Senate. He apparently discussed his draft with Prime Minister Barton and the Clerk of the House of Representatives, G.H. Jenkins. Mr Jenkins seems to have been too busy organising ceremonies and celebrations for the opening of the first parliament to have had much input. The Senate seems to have rejected Blackmore’s draft because of the perceived influence of the Prime Minister. The rules of the South Australian House of Assembly were adopted temporarily because they were familiar to the first President of the Senate, Sir Richard Baker, who also came from South Australia. Some might think South Australians appear to have too much influence on the House. It is a view I do not share, I would hasten to reassure you, Mr Speaker.

The Standing Orders Committee presented further drafts in 1903, 1905, 1937, 1943 and 1949. That is disappointing but a tad reassuring, as it appears the current Procedure Committee may not be the only one that has had difficulty in getting its recommendations adopted. The goals of the 1963 review were the elimination of unnecessary forms, omission of obsolete provisions, definition of established practice and amendment of orders which were in conflict with the practices of the House. The review also made some significant procedural changes, especially with regard to financial procedures, as is described in our current report House estimates. The House did not adopt permanent standing orders until 1950. It is fair to say that these standing orders did not differ greatly from the temporary ones they replaced. Indeed, only minor changes were made. The 1963 revision adopted a new set of standing orders and really should be considered as the first set of complete standing orders for the House.

Now, at the start of the new century and millennium, it is appropriate to have a mod-
ern set of standing orders to reflect the evolution of parliamentary procedure and practice. The 1963 standing orders survive much as a patchwork quilt might have: they have been amended in parts over the years. Many standing orders have been omitted, leaving only headings and tantalising those who might speculate about what was there. There are obsolete provisions that are now not used. Some have never been used—for example, standing order 317, which states:

When the Royal Prerogative is concerned in any paper, an address shall be presented to the Governor-General praying that such paper may be laid before the House.

It has never been used.

This revision of standing orders has been a significant and valuable learning exercise for all members of the committee, as the purpose and meaning of each and every standing order had to be understood in the first instance. I know that I benefited considerably, and I suspect that all members did. The trick of course, Mr Speaker, which you will be quick to point out, is to retain the knowledge—and I am afraid that may be less certain. For the committee it has been a hard slog but very worthwhile. Our secretary, Judy Middlebrook, and Peter Fowler, who has a second to none understanding of the standing orders and parliamentary procedure, ably assisted members of the Procedure Committee, and we are indebted to them. I also commend our chair, the honourable member for McPherson, who brings out the best in the committee notwithstanding our disparate views. On the Labor side, the member for Batman has generously given of his time to the committee, notwithstanding his many other commitments, and the member for Calwell, even though a new member, has made her own contribution to this report.

Although sorely tempted to, the committee did not propose any new standing orders or amend standing orders to change the intent or meaning of a particular standing order. The changes have been made to the language, order of chapters and the index with the principal aim of making them user friendly for all members and the public at large. The parliament will not be able to avoid adopting new procedures and standing orders if it is to adapt and evolve and meet modern expectations of the people we seek to serve. Indeed, the parliament needs to re-capture the confidence and respect of the people, which has been strained over recent time. This will be a challenge, as the chair points out, for the committee and the House at a later time. On a lighter note I am pleased that my good friend the honourable member for Cowan will no longer be enmeshed in standing order 60, which does not survive the new standing orders.

The Canadian parliament, at the beginning of each new parliament, has a debate about standing orders. In the Australian context this is probably one step too far. The Australian Senate introduced revised standing orders in 1990, following a similar review process. This revision then is hardly trailblazing. Nevertheless, Mr Speaker, I hope that you will be able to lend your support to the adoption of these new standing orders for the commencement of the next parliament. I would also hope that both the government and the opposition would agree. I live in hope and commend these standing orders to all honourable members of the House.

The SPEAKER—Does the member for McPherson wish to move a motion in connection with the report to enable it to be debated on a future occasion?

Mrs MAY (McPherson) (1.09 p.m.)—I move:

That the House take note of the report.

I seek leave to continue my remarks later. Leave granted.
The SPEAKER—In accordance with the resolution agreed to earlier, the debate is adjourned. The resumption of the debate will be made an order of the day for a later hour this day and the member will have leave to continue speaking when the debate is resumed.

PRIVATE MEMBERS’ BUSINESS

Royal Australian Air Force

Mr RIPOLL (Oxley) (1.09 p.m.)—I move:

That this House:

(1) recognises the contribution of the Royal Australian Air Force to the defence of Australia;

(2) recognises and acknowledges the importance of the F111 fleet to the security of Australia and the region and the contribution this aircraft has made to Australia’s defence;

(3) congratulates the Australian Defence Force Parliamentary Program for giving Members of Parliament greater access and a better working knowledge of the daily operations of our defence forces;

(4) congratulates RAAF Base Amberley for the great work it does as a defence base and recognises the expertise of the RAAF personnel working at the base; and

(5) recognises the contribution RAAF Base Amberley makes to the city of Ipswich and the community link that has been fostered over many years.

The Oxley electorate and the city of Ipswich have for many years been proud supporters of RAAF Base Amberley. From its humble, early beginnings in 1938 this base has grown to be an important part of Ipswich, its people and its identity. The RAAF throughout Australia has made a huge contribution to the defence of Australia, but more importantly the RAAF, particularly at Amberley, has been integral in the overall defence picture for our region. Part of the base’s role has been, since the 1973 introduction of the F111, as a key strategic air platform for the defence of our nation. There has also been the deterrent factor that such an aircraft has in our region.

When I first wrote this motion some months ago to congratulate and recognise the RAAF and the F111 for their contribution to Australia’s defence, the debate was still raging as to the possible date of retirement for the F111 platform. At that time I had just completed the ADF Parliamentary Program at RAAF Base Amberley and gained a much better understanding of the capability and contribution of the F111. My time at the base also made me realise that there is no other platform that can deliver the same defence projection for Australia as the F111. But the fleet is becoming aged and I believe everyone agrees that, at some time in the future, change will be necessary.

At that point in time the questions remained as to when the retirement year would be announced, how to replace the F111 capability and what would fill the gap between the time of retirement and the commissioning of any new platform. Some of those questions have since been answered by the government and this has at least given certainty to RAAF Base Amberley and the many thousands of personnel and contractors attached to the base and the F111.

My biggest concern for some time has been the gap in defence capability that will be created by the retirement of the F111 in 2010. The fact that the government has decided to retire early the F111 platform means that there will be that defence gap, with only the size of the gap in question now. In this case the capability gap created is massive and will remain even after the new joint strike fighter, the F35, is fully commissioned as the replacement for the ageing F111 platform. Dr Carlo Kopp, writing for the Aerospace and Defence Newsletter HeadsUp, claims that the F111 cuts will cripple Austra-
lied power. It is a big claim and one he backs with data on our current capabilities. He argues:

The basic force structure equations in relation to combat power is dictated by numbers of aircraft, how many weapons they carry, and how far they can carry them.

That makes perfect sense and is logical. To understand this better, Dr Kopp explained that throw-weight is the internationally accepted measure of the striking capability of a defence force. He further explains that the throw-weight is a product of the strike range of the weapons systems and its firepower. According to Dr Kopp this data dramatically outlines that:

The removal of the F111 from the RAAF inventory amounts to a 62.5 per cent reduction in RAAF throw weight. Even after considering a simpler measure like relative firepower in total numbers of 2000 lb weapons lifted still yields a 45 per cent reduction in strike capability when the F111 is removed.

He also claims that the government’s defence capability review briefing statement that there would be no strike capability gap is a very brave statement.

I have on many occasions made public my concerns about the defence capability gap that will exist before the F35 is ready. Even if the F35 is delivered on time in 2012-15, there will still be a need to train pilots, air-crew, maintenance people and support personnel as well as to tool up for this new platform. This effort alone will be a major task, beyond the mere delivery of the equipment itself. The fact that, even after full commissioning, the F35 will not be capable of delivering the same throw-weight as the F111 remains difficult to accept.

There is no doubt that we are faced with hard choices, but the fact that the government has mismanaged its defence budget with massive overspending and blow-outs has meant that critical defence decisions are weighted towards budget constraints rather than capability maintenance. For Australia to maintain its current capability, it will need to purchase more F35s and support aircraft than presently indicated in the budget or review current defence strategy altogether.

One area, though, where the government has got it right is in the introduction of the ADF Parliamentary Program. As members of parliament we are often called upon to make vital strategic policy decisions about defence without fully appreciating what happens behind the scenes in terms of the defence forces and the people they employ. The ADFPP is one of the most interesting and vital programs that a member of parliament could participate in to gain a better understanding of defence. This program has given many MPs an otherwise impossible to be obtained insight into the daily workings of defence bases, defence platforms and equipment and, even more importantly, a look at the lives of our Defence Force personnel and the contribution they make to Australia.

For me, the opportunity to spend a week at RAAF Base Amberley has been an absolute privilege and an experience I will not forget. I met a great bunch of people that are highly dedicated to their work, highly skilled and highly motivated. The people I met are enthusiastic about the RAAF, they understand the roles they play and they are more than willing to show a member of parliament just what it is about Defence life that makes it such an exceptional career. The opportunity to live and breathe the RAAF Amberley experience as part of 82 Wing and the F111 family showed me how important a well-resourced and equipped modern air force is to our security and our regional role of cooperation with our neighbours.

I also want to note the contribution that RAAF Base Amberley makes to Ipswich city and the local community. The base and the
RAAF community have, without a doubt, helped shape Ipswich city. It is hard to imagine what Ipswich would be like today if it were not for Amberley, as Australia’s premier base, and the F111. But unfortunately the F111 will be no more from 2010. This will be the end of an era, the end of an Australian icon like no other, as the government has announced the retirement of the F111 fleet.

I want to specifically thank a number of people I came across during my stay at Amberley: the staff at the officers mess, the sergeants mess and the airmen’s mess alike. It was a particularly rewarding experience for me personally to spend a week on a base such as Amberley, our No. 1 base, to see not only the different platforms—the F111, the Caribou and other aircraft—but also what happens behind the scenes with the maintenance and the many contractors that we now have, such as TAS Aviation, Boeing, Honeywell, Raytheon and a number of others. These are now an integral part of Defence Force life. They are integral in the sense that they now make up a vital part of the maintenance crews. In fact, as Defence—and, in particular, RAAF in this area—moves more and more towards private contractors, we can see a growing link between what was once the bastion of Defence Force personnel and what is now done by civilian contractors. It works better than I expected. Having been given a briefing and having met all of the different contractors, I was very impressed by the level of service they provide and the understanding they have of what actually makes a strong Defence Force. I do have a concern, though, that in the long run, we will lose the in-house skills and corporate knowledge in terms of training our own people.

I would like to thank Fran Bailey, as the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Defence, for organising the program. I also want to thank Wing Commander Kim Osley, Squadron Leader Dallas Hagerty—who, by the way, flies Caribous, which he tells me is just as much fun and just as important as flying F111s—Squadron Leader Steve Clark, who piloted the F111 I had the privilege of navigating, and Air Commodore John Quaife, Commander Air Combat Group with the FA18s, for the debrief and further insight into the strategic importance of the F111. And a special thanks, of course, goes to the head of the ADF Parliamentary Program, Mr Ray Perry, a retired air commodore, and the executive officer, Gary Walbrook, for a job well done.

**The SPEAKER**—Is the motion seconded?

**Mr CAMERON THOMPSON** (Blair) (1.19 p.m.)—I second the motion, and I thank the member for Oxley for bringing the motion forward. Amberley is an important asset to the Ipswich region and to all of Australia. As the member for Blair, it is something that I am immensely proud of, as Amberley is located within the borders of my electorate—but I know that the member for Oxley has many RAAF personnel living in his area. It is good to see this debate on the Notice Paper so that we can pay credit to some of the good work that is being done at Amberley as well as note the progress of the ADF Parliamentary Program.

I want to lead off by talking a little bit about Amberley. It is somewhat ironic that when they initially set out to locate an Air Force base in south-east Queensland, the one that eventually became Amberley, they looked in an area of swampy land down at Boondall where the Boondall entertainment centre now is—of course there was no entertainment centre there then. They rejected that area because it was too prone to flooding. Of course, what is ironic now is that the Brisbane airport is in the vicinity of Boondall. I still think that Amberley is a much better
The asset as far as Australia is concerned than Brisbane airport. I think we can do many things in relation to air departures and organising the defence of the nation through RAAF Base Amberley than could ever have been done at the Boondall site. It was a very good choice by the people in those days to spend the equivalent of $21,600 on about 330 hectares of land to purchase the base of Amberley. The base has grown since then. Today it is made up of 1,660 hectares, so it has grown dramatically since its purchase in 1938. There are 3,500 service and civilian personnel working out of Amberley, and the core of the activity is no doubt the F111. The F111, a brilliant innovation in air combat and strike missions, was developed and first delivered to the Australian Air Force in June 1973 and it has gone on to defend this nation admirably ever since.

On the base at Amberley, the two F111 squadrons are located within 82 Wing—previously operating separately as the Strike Reconnaissance Group; now part of the Air Combat Group. Also on the base—not to leave out everyone else that acts there—there is 44 Wing, the air traffic control detachment; 78 Wing, the technical training flight; the Airfield Defence Wing, which provides the airfield defence guards who go in and establish very quickly locations where RAAF activities are required; and a health services wing, which provides very important support to the personnel. One of the main activities on the base is the Combat Support Group, which is under the command of Air Commodore Stewart Cameron. The base itself is commanded by Steve Butterworth.

I now want to turn to the activities of the parliamentary program. This program has been successful in bringing home to local members such as me the way the people at a base such as Amberley—the people whom we seek to represent—go about their activities, the strong sense of camaraderie, the strong base that they have in training and the high aspirations that they have in seeking to defend this country and make Australia a better place through their participation in the RAAF and also through the other branches of the services involved in the parliamentary program.

I was not involved in the 2003 program, unlike the member for Oxley—he was lucky enough to get a trip on an F111. I was involved in a program in 2002 where we looked at the training of RAAF personnel. It was a fantastic experience to be involved in that program at Point Cook, watching the future air traffic controllers, navigators, pilots and all the admin officers and other people involved in RAAF activities going through their paces and learning what it takes to become an officer. It was all about leadership. I think members of this parliament should look very closely at the leadership program that they run down there, particularly the part at the Wombat State Forest down in Victoria where they go through their leadership exercises. I would like to challenge members of parliament to look at whether they could participate in those programs and actually pass. (Time expired)

Mr WILKIE (Swan) (1.24 p.m.)—I rise to support the motion moved by the honourable member for Oxley. Having witnessed them first hand as part of the Australian Defence Force Parliamentary Program, I believe that the RAAF personnel that we have are exceptional. They perform an absolutely vital role for Australia’s security, and we need to give them all the support that we can. I get very disappointed when I hear some people complaining about things such as aircraft noise when we are dealing with some of our fighter jets—particularly around here in recent times. RAAF personnel do an absolutely fabulous job, and we really need to get behind them.
I was part of the Defence Force Parliamentary Program which was deployed to Amberley Air Force Base earlier this year. We were attached to 82 Wing, which has two squadrons of F111s, a training arm and an operational arm. Of course, they also have the other wings that have been mentioned previously. The other participants on that program were the member for Mitchell, Alan Cadman, and the member for Oxley, Bernie Ripoll. We had a thoroughly entertaining experience looking at how these aircraft operate.

In talking about the member for Oxley, I should mention that Amberley is just outside Ipswich. There is a fabulous motorway, the Ipswich Motorway, that goes down there and it is in need of some very dramatic repairs. It is great to see that Labor has announced that, if we get into power, we are going to fund that initiative. Bernie, well done—you have really fought for your electorate. It will be great to see that come through. Of course, one of the key beneficiaries will be the RAAF personnel who will be able to get down to their base a lot quicker and safer.

The Defence Force Parliamentary Program is an excellent program. I was involved last year on a patrol boat out of Cairns going on the HMAS Ipswich and recently went on the Collins class submarine, the HMAS Sheean, and got to see how good the Navy personnel are. Whilst we were at Amberley, we saw how the ground crews operate, how the weapons systems operate and are maintained, how civilian contractors work—for example, Boeing—and the operational planning for missions. There is a tremendous amount of work that goes on behind the scenes that people would not normally see. We even spent some time in a flight simulator.

The F111 is a fabulous aircraft, and it is so sad that it will be mothballed early. This is one of the only aircraft in the world that can carry something like 22,000 pounds of payload 2,500 nautical miles. For a country like Australia, where we have to cover vast distances and get out to where these aircraft are needed, that sort of capability is enormously important, particularly when you consider that nothing in our region comes close to dealing with these sorts of aircraft. They can travel at over twice the speed of sound at altitude and, as we experienced, they can travel at mach 1.3 at 90 feet off the water. It is quite amazing to experience that aircraft at that sort of speed.

As I said, they have certain strengths, such as their speed and payload, but they also have a unique ejection system. If you are in an F111 and you get into trouble, the entire cockpit blows away from the aircraft. Therefore, if you are high up, you do not have to worry about freezing temperatures and, if you land in the water, the capsule actually floats. So it is a lot safer. The problem of course is that, if you do have to eject, you go out of the aircraft at something like 20 Gs. So your spine gets compressed about three-quarters of an inch—which is not very good for your back. To show you how good the F111s are, they recently took part in some exercises in the United States in Operation Red Flag. They flew every mission that was available to be flown in and they had no casualties. This was despite the fact that they were competing against 28 other nations. That gives you an example of the sort of capability we have.

In terms of weaknesses, obviously age is a problem. They are high maintenance. We have had wings cracking and leaking fuel tanks. But the main problem of course has been the lack of funds. The government is spending so much of the defence budget in operational areas, I believe it is forgetting about the actual need to upgrade and maintain our capability at a real level. As was
mentioned previously, there is a gap between the scrapping of the F111 and the introduction of the new joint strike fighter. These new aircraft will not be able to perform with the same sort of capability; in fact, the aircraft cannot even lift some of the bombs that we are going to be using.

The member for Oxley has thanked certain people. I would like to pass on my congratulations and thanks to Air Commodore Ray Perry, Executive Officer Gary Walbrook, Lieutenant Commander Kaylene Williams—who has done previous deployments—and also the member for Wannon, David Hawker, who travelled to England and looked at how these programs should be put together and set it up. It was a fabulous effort. I also pass on my thanks to the Hon. Fran Bailey; General Cosgrove; the three heads of the forces; and, at Amberley, Base Commander and Wing Commander Kim Osley; Base Program Coordinator, Squadron Leader Dallas Hagerty; my pilot, who is the most experienced F111 pilot in the world, Training Flight Commander Squadron Leader Ted Schneider; Air Commodore John Quaiffe; and all the staff, aircrew and private contractors involved. (Time expired)

Mr LINDSAY (Herbert) (1.29 p.m.)—I feel well qualified to take part in the debate this afternoon on RAAF Base Amberley. The city I represent is Australia’s only garrison city, a garrison city that has components of the Royal Australian Air Force and the Army and some small components of the Navy. Because of that, it is not surprising that Townsville has this year contributed the most Australian Defence Force personnel to serve overseas in the last 12 months, a mighty effort for Townsville.

Last Thursday night I was on Townsville’s Strand to see the welcome home parade with the Chief of Army. It was packed, as Townsville and Thuringowa people came out to pay tribute to the men and women of the Australian Defence Force who had been deployed to the strife torn regions around the globe. No community in this country has done more to support the ADF. ADF personnel are like members of each and every family in Townsville and Thuringowa, and that is how we see them.

The motion before the House today has made mention of the contribution the RAAF has made to the defence of Australia. RAAF Townsville has a number of important components. The 323 Combat Services Support Squadron, led by Wing Commander Glendan Krause, manages all the day-to-day base functions that are needed. The 395 Expeditionary Combat Support Wing manages all the expeditionary work that the RAAF does across the country and across the world, and it is commanded out of Townsville, not out of Amberley.

No. 1 Combat Logistics Squadron manages all of the bits and pieces that are needed when our troops are deployed overseas. The No. 1 Air Terminal Squadron, detachment Townsville, manages the movement of people. The 27 Squadron is a reserve squadron, and we have a detachment of Caribous from Amberley 38 Squadron at Townsville. We have 44 Wing Air Traffic Control, and a number of their personnel are in Iraq at the moment running Baghdad International Airport. Isn’t it interesting that Australia’s RAAF air traffic controllers are doing air traffic control? They were asked to go to Baghdad because they are the best in the world—and they have come out of Townsville.

We have a rather unique school at RAAF Townsville as well: the combat survival training school, which is one of the premier combat survival training schools in the world today. Members of defence forces from all round the world come to Townsville to at-
tend the school. It is also interesting that members of all three services—Navy, Army and Air Force—who are in flying jobs attend the school in Townsville. That is a great example of the three services working together—and it is happening in our garrison city in the north.

I was very privileged to have participated in the ADF Parliamentary Program. While I have Australia’s largest army base in my electorate, of the two programs that I have done in the last two years one has been Air Force and one has been Navy. Last year, I was at RAAF Edinburgh to participate in a parliamentary program. I was pleased to see a wide range of activities.

I started off in the recruit training unit. I was carrying the same pack and doing the same thing as the recruits. It is a marvellous program. The young recruits love it. It is a 10-week course—fortunately, I did not have to stay for 10 weeks—and they learn a lot about themselves and about being part of a team. I saw aviation medication and the research and development unit, 92 Wing, and the radar surveillance unit, which I cannot talk about. But it is fascinating what Australia can do.

I have had no exposure to the Navy, but I was particularly impressed this year with the women in the Navy. The Navy is seamless. Women are able to get to senior positions, and their capabilities are fantastic. I very much appreciate the opportunity Fran Bailey gave me to participate in the program. I recommend the ADF parliamentary program to my colleagues—go and enjoy and learn.

Mr BEVIS (Brisbane) (1.34 p.m.)—I join with other speakers in this debate in placing on the parliamentary record our thanks and appreciation for the work of the Royal Australian Air Force. It is a good thing that the parliament has discussions about defence related issues. All too seldom do we have the opportunity to talk about these matters. The parliamentary program that has been referred to by other speakers is an excellent way in which many members can gain exposure to something of the life of our military. The challenge for all of us in this place as we progress in these debates is to go beyond simply regurgitating the little bits of information we pick up as we wander around Defence establishments to being able to critically analyse what is going on.

With respect to the RAAF—and particularly with respect to Amberley air base at Ipswich, in my colleague the member for Oxley’s electorate—the F111s based at Amberley are extraordinary aircraft. They have many unique capabilities that set them apart from all other aircraft flying in the world. It is no secret that the United States has on a couple of occasions sought the support of Australia and the provision of our F111s to engagements that the US has been involved in since they mothballed all of their F111s. For various reasons we have not done that. In fact, I am trying to think whether or not the F111s have been in a combat environment since they were first acquired. I am not sure they have. But there is no doubt that they are a particularly capable aircraft.

There is also no doubt that dominance of the air is the single most critical thing that all nations look to when it comes to matters of national security and defence. In spite of the great work done by our Air Force personnel—exceedingly well led by the Chief of Air Force, Air Marshal Angus Houston, a person of high integrity and well regarded in this place—they have been let down by poor decision making on the part of the Howard government.

We are at the point where the F111s are to be phased out, and the decision to replace them is vitally important to the security of our nation as we move through the first two
and possibly three decades of this new century. It was somewhat astounding to find out how the current government decided to handle that matter. There was a program for the defence department and the Air Force to evaluate the various options—the various platforms available around the world. Without any forewarning, without any proper analysis, the government simply scrapped that process, threw it out the window and made an announcement that we were going to participate in the joint strike fighter, or JSF, program. That stunned everybody in the defence community. I want to read from an article in the *Asia-Pacific Defence Reporter* of July-August last year, when that decision was taken. Referring to the decision by the Minister for Defence, Senator Hill, it said:

Hill’s announcement spread through the Australian and international defence and aerospace industries within minutes. In the Canberra offices of BAE Systems, the European Aircraft, Defence and Space company, Dassault and the French defence marketing agency SOFEMA, the announcement was initially met with disbelief. The timing was personally devastating for at least one Dassault staffer. On the morning of 27 June— that was the day the government made its announcement—

the company’s newly appointed manager for Air 6000 … arrived in from France to set up a marketing office … that was expected to last five years.

He got off the plane to set up this office for five years, to be involved in the evaluation program, only to discover that the morning he had arrived the government had made up its mind—before there had been any evaluation whatsoever. The article in the *Asia-Pacific Defence Reporter* goes on to say:

… [that gentleman] flew home in early July, with Dassault deciding corporately to scrap all plans for a further Australian presence.

That is, as a result of this government’s mishandling of this most critical of acquisitions, Dassault decided they wanted nothing to do with us anymore. The same could be said of others who were involved. So bad was the process, British Aerospace first found out about it when they got a phone call from a journalist.

This was a disgraceful way to conduct the acquisition of the most important platform this nation will acquire for the defence of our territory for the next 30 years. JSF may turn out to be a brilliant plane and may turn out to do everything we want; the fact is we do not know. The government does not know and the minister does not know, but they have pre-emptively decided to acquire that aircraft, without any consideration of alternative platforms or the needs that we have as a nation in the two decades ahead. Our defence personnel and our nation deserve far better planning and competence from governments and ministers than they have been receiving from this government since it was first elected in 1996 and from the litany of ministers and department secretaries that have come and gone in that time. *(Time expired)*

**Mr HARTSUYKER** (Cowper) *(1.40 a.m.)*—I rise to speak on Mr Ripoll’s motion as it appears on the *Notice Paper*. I concur with the statements by other members of this House that the Australian Air Force does indeed play a vital role in the defence of this nation. The F111 is a very important defence asset to this country, with long-range strike capabilities. The men and women of RAAF Base Amberley are certainly to be commended for their skill and professionalism in maintaining the F111 in a combat-ready state, despite its advancing age. It still is an impressive aircraft, with the ability to carry a heavy weapons load up to 1,000 nautical miles and, as was said earlier, the ability to travel at over twice the speed of sound. With modern electronic systems, it is still a very potent combat weapon.
I note there is some criticism of the new joint strike fighter program. I should hark back to when the F111 was to be acquired, because there was considerable concern then about whether this new plane, this revolutionary F111 with its swing-wing design, would work in practice for Australia. It has proven to be a vital piece of our defence hardware.

I also participated in the recent Australian Defence Force Parliamentary Program with the Airlift Group, located at RAAF Base Richmond. The group operates Lockheed C130Hs and Js, Caribous and Boeing 707 refuelling tankers. I would have to concur with other members speaking on this motion that the skills and professionalism of the Airlift Group at Richmond are a credit to the country, just as those of the personnel at Amberley are a credit to the country. Airlift Group have distinguished themselves in a range of operations, including Iraq, where Hercules C130 transports flew 1,180 sorties carrying some 3,600 tonnes of cargo, 8,000 passengers and 600 medical cases.

The tragedy in Bali showcased the capabilities of Airlift Group in responding to an emergency. Operation Bali Assist, which took place between 13 and 15 October 2002, involved five aircraft and aeromedical evacuation teams. During Bali Assist, 11 missions were flown between Bali and Darwin carrying 68 medical patients and 22 other evacuees. Airlift Group also carried 35 patients from Darwin to southern cities for treatment. The nation watched and appreciated the professionalism of Airlift Group in that vital moment of need for so many Australians overseas. In the Solomons the C130s again were active, transporting some 2,000 tonnes of cargo and some 3,200 passengers in support of our operations in that theatre. The Bali evacuation and the operations in Iraq and the Solomons clearly displayed the total professionalism of Airlift Group Richmond and the total professionalism of our Air Force.

The Australian Defence Force Parliamentary Program gave me as a member of this House a valuable insight into the day-to-day operations of our military, the high levels of performance expected of our defence personnel and the high level of responsibility placed on very young officers. The fact that they pass with flying colours shows their enthusiasm for the job and their enthusiasm for defending our nation.

The defence experience at Richmond was indeed a varied one. On that defence rotation we had the opportunity to observe the packing of parachutes, the preparation of loads to be dropped from aircraft, vehicle and aircraft repair and maintenance, control tower operation, and logistics and planning. We also had the opportunity to join the night security patrol, accompanying the dog handlers around the base in the very late hours of the night—I must say it was quite cool, being the middle of winter. We met the fire crews and were involved in the PT sessions in the morning. We also had the opportunity to use the flight simulator and had some flying time in both Caribous and Hercules.

I would like to commend all the staff of the heavy lift group at RAAF Richmond. I would especially like to thank Warrant Officer (Discipline) Brewer for his assistance during the week, and the men and women of the sergeants mess at Richmond for their hospitality and camaraderie. I would also like to thank Warrant Officer Roy Eggmolesse, who put together the program at Richmond. The men and women of Airlift Group Richmond could have no greater advocate than their member, the member for Macquarie, who is very proud of their achievements. He has the great honour of representing the fine men and women of the base at Richmond. I would also like to thank
the commander of the base. The very fine job that his staff do is a credit to him.

The SPEAKER— Order! It being 1.45 p.m. the debate is interrupted in accordance with standing order 101. The debate is adjourned and the resumption of the debate will be made an order of the day for the next sitting.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Environment: Tasmanian Rivers

Ms O’BYRNE (Bass) (1.45 p.m.)—As a nation we are recognising the importance of ensuring that our river systems are healthy. In Tasmania we are not immune to environmental problems associated with inland waterways. The South Esk River, the state’s largest river, located in northern Tasmania, arises in the mountainous country to the north of Ben Lomond before discharging into the Tamar estuary in Launceston. The South Esk is a major source of electricity generation, domestic drinking water, irrigation and agricultural supply and is a major recreational attraction. The South Esk is also a dumping ground for effluent, and there are growing concerns that the river system is under increasing pressure from ageing and inefficient water and sewage treatment plants. As a society we need to better explore the ways we utilise waste water. We must have a sustained effort to reduce the amount of discharge into our river systems. The Esk also presents a challenge when it comes to siltation management. A photo in today’s local paper clearly shows silted water in the Tamar yacht basin. The Howard government claims debt reduction as one of its principal achievements; the corollary, of course, is that it has done so through running down spending on key community needs. I call on the Howard government to enhance its support of community efforts to improve environmental infrastructure and, in particular, the quality of northern Tasmanian river systems.

Cook Electorate: Education, Training and Business Development

Mr BAIRD (Cook) (1.46 p.m.)—Last week I attended the opening of a new $5 million education, training and business development precinct in the Sutherland Shire, located at the Loftus TAFE campus. The federal government contributed approximately $700,000 to this project via the two organisations of the GROW employment council and AusIndustry. Through the joint efforts of the University of Wollongong, TAFE and Sutherland Shire Council, the southern suburbs of Sydney will have access to a world-class business incubator for small and medium sized enterprises. The Sutherland Shire Hub for Economic Development, known locally as the SSHED, will provide a dynamic environment for up to 24 innovative businesses and aspiring entrepreneurs. The flow-on benefits will be great: jobs and opportunities will be created and, hopefully, there will be some wealth for the community. Aspiring young entrepreneurs will develop important and strategic business contacts. The SSHED is going to ensure that the precinct becomes a centre of business and education excellence and will form an integral part of the economic and social development of the shire.

Geospatial Analysis Centre

Mr GIBBONS (Bendigo) (1.47 p.m.)—I rise to inform the House that the Geospatial Analysis Centre, which produces defence maps at Fortuna in Bendigo, is experiencing yet another review to decide its future. This latest review is examining three options: (1) transfer the entire facility to Canberra, (2) transfer some of the more sensitive mapping tasks to Canberra or (3) retain the entire operation at its present site at Fortuna in Bendigo. This defence facility has come under threat of closure on previous occasions since the election of the Howard government in 1996. People in Bendigo could be forgiven
for thinking that this government is obsessed with driving this facility away from Bendigo. At stake are 150 positions, representing $8.2 million per year in direct wages and a potential $17.4 million per year in lost output to the Bendigo economy. I remind the Prime Minister of his address to the Nyngan community on 31 January 2000, when he said that there would be a red light flashing whenever any minister was contemplating a decision that involved a reduction in the delivery of existing Commonwealth services in regional and rural Australia. I will conclude by saying: Prime Minister, the red light is flashing; when are you going to do something about securing these positions in Bendigo?

Eden-Monaro Electorate: Tourism

Mr NAIRN (Eden-Monaro) (1.48 p.m.)—Last week the release of the white paper on tourism coincided with a visit I paid to the Big 4 Holiday Hub Beach Resort at Pambula Beach. It had just won a 2003 New South Wales tourism award for business excellence. This Wednesday, this resort will have been there for 40 years in the same family. Garry and Narelle Hetherington, who now operate it, took it over from their mother and father, Margaret and Bruce Hetherington, back in 1994. In the last calendar year, Holiday Hub welcomed 16,500 guests, 85 per cent of whom were from interstate, making Holiday Hub one of the larger exporters for New South Wales; 65 per cent of the guests had visited Holiday Hub before; and 20 per cent came on recommendations from past guests. Using the ABS figures, Holiday Hub, conservatively, contributes over $17 million per annum to the local economy. Garry and Narelle have played major roles in promoting local tourism by being active participants in local tourism bodies. Garry resigned only last month from the board of directors of Big 4 Australia. He had been chairman of that board for the past two years and had spent a total of seven years on the board. Holiday Hub Beach Resort, throughout its 40-year history, has always been a very generous corporate citizen, supporting in cash and kind many needy community programs. Congratulations to a great resort in a great tourism industry on the far South Coast in my electorate.

Ansett Australia

Mr BRENDAN O’CONNOR (Burke) (1.50 p.m.)—Many times in the last two years I have mentioned the problems in my electorate associated with the collapse of Ansett. I therefore welcome last week’s announcement of an in-principle agreement that has been reached between Ansett administrators and the trustees of the Ansett Ground Staff Superannuation Plan. The delay has caused heartache for many of my constituents, and I know it would be the same for those constituents of neighbouring electorates. There are some 2,500 Ansett families in the electorate of Burke, many of whom have not been able to find full-time work—or, in some cases, part-time work—and have suffered the economic and social consequences of that. So I do welcome the announcement of this agreement. The constituents in my electorate—and those constituents in all electorates across the country that have Ansett families in them—will want to know how quickly they can be paid, how much they will be paid and, indeed, what will occur if there is still a shortfall in their superannuation entitlements. As we know, this government did not deliver on providing for full redundancy entitlements for these workers, which set it apart from the Prime Minister’s brother’s company, whose workers received full entitlements. (Time expired)

Rugby World Cup

Mr KING (Wentworth) (1.51 p.m.)—Last Saturday, 22 November, saw one of the most memorable games of rugby football—a fit-
tiring end to a very successful Rugby World Cup tournament that has put Australia centre stage of the world in sport again, that has confirmed our reputation for excellence in organisation of major events, that has been beneficial to the economy of not just Sydney but the whole nation, and that over a six-week campaign saw an unfavoured Australian team make the final and lose to the favourite, England. No Australian team likes losing. But, as one Aussie fan put it to me at Woollahra Oval in my electorate on Saturday night, ‘If we are to lose to the Poms, it is at least satisfying to lose in the last minute of extra time.’

I want to congratulate the organisers on getting 1.8 million spectators through the turnstiles on grounds around Australia, four million television viewers within Australia and 82,957 people at the final game—a boost to local tourism—as well as on having games that were well run and well attended across the country. One important point to be made is that part of the success of the tournament was the improvement of the mid to lower ranked rugby nations. This parliament should urge the IRB and the administrators involved to invest greater resources in those countries to guarantee the future success of those nations and the tournament as a world event. I urge the IRB to review its support for such nations and develop a detailed strategy, based on proper financial investment in those nations. Finally, the world cup parliamentary team enjoyed success in a satellite tournament a couple of weeks ago when we beat New Zealand in the final. On behalf of our team, I congratulate the Aussie coaches and players. Eddie Jones once played at Clovelly, in my electorate. (Time expired)

McMillan Electorate: Bulk-Billing

Mr ZAHRA (McMillan)  (1.53 p.m.)—People in my electoral district of McMillan are very concerned about the levels of bulk-billing available to them in their communities. In particular, people in West Gippsland are concerned about this issue. I recently organised a petition relating to this, and some 1,500 people have taken the time to fill in the petition, sign it and send it back to me. I am arranging to have this tabled today.

This is a particularly big issue for West Gippsland, where bulk-billing levels have fallen from 63.8 per cent in 1996 to just 45.3 per cent now. That is a massive drop-off in an area where there are a lot of new, young families moving in who particularly need to be able to see a bulk-billing doctor. I urge the federal government to take heed of what the people of West Gippsland have had to say on this issue and to take seriously the calls in the community to increase bulk-billing levels to what they were under Labor when we were in office, right up to 1996. It is important to say that every year under Labor bulk-billing levels increased, while under the coalition government bulk-billing levels have fallen from around 80 per cent to 65 per cent. Only Labor are committed to keeping bulk-billing for all Australians. I table the petition.

The petition read as follows—
To the Honourable Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives.
We the undersigned citizens of Australia wish to express our concern at the decline in bulk billing rates in West Gippsland and we ask that bulk-billing rates be restored to previous levels.

from 1,517 citizens.

Dunkley Electorate: Kunyung Primary School

Mr BILLSON (Dunkley)  (1.54 p.m.)—Friday was a great day for the Dunkley community and particularly the Kunyung Primary School community. It was my great pleasure to open new building works totalling $2.8 million and officially declare the redeveloped Kunyung Primary School ‘settled, secure and sensational’. The completed
third stage of the redevelopment has transformed the series of portable classrooms and offices into an outstanding, vibrant and modern learning environment, made possible through the Australian government’s $1.6 million grant towards the project. The work of the parents, teachers, former students and entire Kunyung school community for their vision of their school, their fundraising endeavours and their commitment to seeing the best possible permanent facilities available for their students is to be commended.

It is nearly 25 years since Kunyung Primary School commenced as a temporary school made up of relocatable buildings. It has always had a slightly uncertain future, because it was never officially opened and never officially declared a permanent building. This uncertainty and the unexpected benefits it created—the energy, the commitment and the vitality that the unclear picture and unclear future forced the school community to work with—have now returned to the school permanent facilities that are first class. That effort to make sure the school has not been lost to the area has ensured that parents have been very engaged in the school itself. The school council, the parents association and the teachers have done a terrific job, with growing enrolment numbers that see Kunyung Primary School as anything but a temporary location. It is settled, its future is secure, and the new buildings and classrooms are sensational. I would like to congratulate school principal John Pearson and deputy Jim ‘Versace’ Cahill for their dedication and endeavour. (Time expired)

Roads: Ipswich Motorway

Mr RIPOLL (Oxley) (1.56 p.m.)—Two weeks ago the Courier-Mail hosted the Ipswich Motorway forum in Ipswich City. The forum was attended by over 150 people. There were people from the community and elected representatives. There were many Labor members there, as Ipswich is a Labor town. The Liberal candidate for Moggill, across the river, was also there, along with residents from Ipswich and the local region and residents from Moggill, Kenmore and that part of the world.

The forum was about the motorway itself, about sharing information and about the different views on the future of the Ipswich Motorway. One of the fascinating parts of the forum was that no matter where you came from and no matter who you were—and it did not even matter which party you represented—pretty well everybody had the same view: the Ipswich Motorway is in desperate need of a total upgrade. That was the view of everyone except the member for Blair, who has a different view: the Ipswich Motorway is a dud and the northern alternative through Moggill should be built instead. Labor, on the other hand, believes the Ipswich Motorway should be fixed and should be completely upgraded. As such, Labor has committed that, on coming to government, it will fully upgrade the Ipswich Motorway.

I have collected around 4,000 signatures from people in the local area who are desperate to have this very unsafe road fixed. It is about time that the government made the very tough decision that infrastructure items, such as motorways, are a necessity for a growing and developing community. I have the fastest growing community in all of Australia in Springfield, and this area can no longer handle the sort of accidents, road blockages and damage that is done on the Ipswich Motorway. (Time expired)

Military Detention

Mr ORGAN (Cunningham) (1.57 p.m.)—The principle that anyone who is accused of a penal offence should be considered innocent until proved guilty is one which we hold dear in this country and one which must form the basis of any just legal system. It is
therefore pleasing to note that the Minister for Foreign Affairs told the ABC’s AM program this morning that an Australian man seized by British forces in Iraq over the weekend was entitled to that presumption. The minister’s precise words were:

“Well, for a start he’s innocent until proven guilty ...

I could not agree more. An assumption of innocence is an important part of universal human rights law. It is laid down in article 11 of the United Nations Universal Declaration on Human Rights, in the United Nations International Convention on Civil and Political Rights and in the Council of Europe’s European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms. I am therefore puzzled at this government’s blatant hypocrisy in this matter. Why is the same presumption of innocence not applied to David Hicks and Mamdouh Habib? Why has the minister told the Australian people they are guilty when they have not been charged or subject to a fair, open trial? Why won’t the Prime Minister defend the basic rights of these Australians, as Prime Minister Blair is doing for the nine British detainees? As the minister said this morning:

The circumstances of why the Australian was in the house I don’t know, but I do know that it seems to be a case of him unfortunately being in the wrong place at the wrong time. Could I suggest to the minister and to the Prime Minister—(Time expired)

Australia-United States Free Trade Agreement

Mr MURPHY (Lowe) (1.59 p.m.)—Over the weekend I received an email from a constituent who is a member of both Actors Equity and the Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance about the negotiations between Australia and the US for a free trade agreement. Inter alia, she said:

Any free trade agreement we enter into must ensure that Australia remains free to respond to these changes as and when it sees fit. Australia must be free to introduce any new measures at any point in time and for ALL technologies to meet Australia’s cultural objectives as they are determined by our Governments.

Please ENSURE that the US/Australia free trade agreement does not tie the hands of future Governments to introduce new measures of support.

I could not agree more.

The SPEAKER—Order! It being 2.00 p.m., in accordance with standing order 106A the time for members’ statements has concluded.

MINISTERIAL ARRANGEMENTS

Mr HOWARD (2.00 p.m.)—I inform the House that the Minister for Trade will be absent from question time today and for the remainder of the week. He is in the United States for discussions on a possible free trade agreement between Australia and the United States. The Minister for Foreign Affairs will answer questions on his behalf.

RUGBY WORLD CUP

Mr HOWARD (Bennelong—Prime Minister) (2.00 p.m.)—Mr Speaker, I seek the indulgence of the House.

Mr Speaker, I seek the indulgence of the House.

The SPEAKER—The Prime Minister may proceed.

Mr HOWARD—I know that all members of the House would want me, at the conclusion of a remarkably successful Rugby World Cup, to congratulate the Australian Rugby Union as the host union for having organised undoubtedly the best Rugby Union World Cup so far. The organisation by John O’Neill and his colleagues has been absolutely outstanding. I take the opportunity of congratulating the English team on its victory. I took the liberty yesterday of ringing the British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, to congratulate him on behalf of Australia on a truly meritorious win by a very fine English
side—exemplified by their remarkable five-eighth, Jonny Wilkinson.

Finally, and very importantly, can I say how proud every Australian must be of the performance of the Wallabies in this tournament. Given the very limited prospects of success that were extended to them at various stages by sporting commentators, not only here in Australia but also around the world, their performance against New Zealand was quite inspiring, and to hold that very powerful English side to level-pegging until the very last minute was a great performance.

I am happy to inform the House that—as I have already informed the Leader of the Opposition—subject to satisfactory accommodation arrangements being established in a crowded capital city, it is intended to hold a parliamentary reception at 5.30 tomorrow evening for the members of the Wallaby team, their wives and the team’s management to say thank you to some very fine Australian sportsmen and also to a first-class administration for having done this country proud in the organisation of this wonderful event.

Mr CREAN (Hotham—Leader of the Opposition) (2.02 p.m.)—On indulgence, I join the Prime Minister in congratulating the Australian Rugby Union for what was a magnificent World Cup. The organisation of it, the spread of it around the country, the marketing of the tickets and the accessibility of the game to so many Australians—I think close to two million people saw rugby played—was a great achievement.

Congratulations also to the Wallabies for reaching the World Cup final and for participating in what was a truly memorable game. I had the privilege to be there, as did the Prime Minister, to see the performance. Whilst we can be disappointed in the result from an Australian perspective, we cannot be disappointed in the way in which the game was played. It was a fantastic game—100 minutes of actual playing time and only won in the last minute. That is what I refer to as percentage football. Congratulations to George Gregan, the captain, and Eddie Jones, the coach, for the leadership and direction. This was a team of champions beaten by another champion team. All of us are richer for the experience and the participation, even if we can be slightly disappointed in the result. Congratulations to the England team. This is something they have striven for, something they have planned hard for and something they have achieved. You would have to be a pretty bad sport not to join in recognising England’s achievements. After all, we have beaten them for the last 20 years at just about every other game they have invented, so I do join in saying congratulations to the England team.

I also say congratulations to the Kangaroos, the league team who also completed a clean sweep of a successful test series in England. The Prime Minister and I had the opportunity to meet with Darren Lockyer and a number of his team-mates when we were in London recently. They came along to receptions associated with the dedication of the memorial. The Kangaroos have not been beaten in a test series in England for 33 years and despite, on this occasion, not taking their strongest team to England, they came from behind in every game to win the series 3-0. The Kangaroos even had their own equivalent of Jonny Wilkinson in Craig Fitzgibbon, who kicked the last-minute equalising goal from the sidelines, under enormous pressure. We saw pressure too in Elton Flatley—sensational goals under truly enormous pressure in the Saturday night game.

I look forward to joining the Prime Minister in meeting the Wallabies. I hope they do find accommodation. Perhaps we could even offer to billet them around this place, Prime
Minister, if they run into difficulties. We will all be up early training, even if they are not. We look forward to congratulating them. It is a sensational achievement and a job well done for Australian rugby union.

ERKMEN, NAZIME

Mr HOWARD (Bennelong—Prime Minister) (2.06 p.m.)—If I could have the indulgence of the House, on behalf of the government I want to offer my condolences to the family of Mrs Nazime Erkmen, who was tragically killed in the terrorist attack against the British Consulate in Istanbul last week. Mrs Erkmen was an Australian citizen and an employee of the British Consulate. She had been living in Istanbul with her elderly mother. She died in hospital on 22 November as a result of injuries received during the bombing of the consulate. Her death is a grim reminder of the continuing threat of terrorism and the innocent victims which it deliberately sets out to kill. Her death also reinforces the urgency of fighting and defeating terrorism. It is a threat that must not and will not prevail.

In concluding, separately, might I join the Leader of the Opposition in extending my congratulations to the Kangaroos. I hope that, at an appropriate time after they have returned to Australia, some bipartisan recognition of their performance can be arranged.

Mr CREAN (Hotham—Leader of the Opposition) (2.07 p.m.)—On indulgence, Mr Speaker, I join with the Prime Minister and offer sympathies from this side of the House to the family of Nazime Erkmen, who was one of a number of people tragically killed in Istanbul in the most recent spate of bombings. She lived in Istanbul but had dual Australian and Turkish citizenship. We offer our sympathies to her family and her friends. It is a shocking circumstance that wanton terrorist destruction can take away innocent lives in such a way. Nazime Erkmen was one of 50 whose lives have been claimed in a number of different incidents in Istanbul recently—50 are dead and 450 have been injured by four suicide bombers who are suspected of having links with al-Qaeda. I think we in Australia should also send our sympathies to the Turkish people. After Bali, we know, as Australians, what actions such as this can do in terms of the impact on communities and societies, and so our thoughts do go out to the Turkish people who have rallied in the cause of peace in response to these horrific incidents. Not only do the opposition join in extending sympathy to the families; we also commit ourselves to the task of all right-minded people in saying that we will not let terrorism succeed. We will ensure that all our efforts are directed to bringing the perpetrators of this awful action to justice and to stamping out terrorism and terrorists.

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

The SPEAKER (2.09 p.m.)—I inform the House that we have present in the gallery this afternoon members of a delegation from the People’s Republic of China who are visiting Australia under the auspices of the Political Exchange Council. We also have in the distinguished visitors gallery the Hon. Ralph Hunt, a former cabinet minister. On behalf of all members of the House, I extend to our visitors a very warm welcome.

Honourable members—Hear, hear!

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Medicare: Reform

Mr CREAN (2.10 p.m.)—My question is to the Minister for Health and Ageing. Minister, if it is right to raise the patient rebate by $5 for concession card holders and kids, why won’t the government lift the patient rebate by $5 for all Australians who are bulk-billed, just as Labor’s plan will?
Mr ABBOTT—Because we believe that the incentive to bulk-bill should be carefully targeted.

Medicare: Reform

Mr DUTTON (2.11 p.m.)—My question is also addressed to the Minister for Health and Ageing. Would the minister outline to the House details of the government’s MedicarePlus package? How is MedicarePlus strengthening our health system and ensuring that Australian families continue to have access to high-quality, affordable health care?

Mr ABBOTT—I thank the member for Dickson for his question and I appreciate his concern to ensure that the people of northern Brisbane continue to enjoy universal access to affordable, high-quality health care. MedicarePlus is a $2.4 billion investment in a stronger, better Medicare system. MedicarePlus has four elements. The first is patient convenience. Thanks to the HIC initiative, patients will be able to access their Medicare rebate from the doctor’s surgery without the need to line up in queues at Medicare offices. Second, MedicarePlus means more doctors and nurses in the system. It means 1,500 more doctors and it means 1,600 more nurses by 2007, and that will take the strain off hard-pressed general practices. Third, it means more opportunities for bulk-billing, through the new $5 incentive payment for doctors who choose to bulk-bill concession card holders and children under 16. Fourth, it means a brand-new safety net to protect households from substantial out-of-pocket out-of-hospital medical benefits schedule expenses.

The MedicarePlus package responds to critics of the government’s earlier proposals. The critics asked for an extra half a billion dollars. The government delivered $1.5 billion more. They were unhappy with the gap proposal. That has gone. They did not like the private health insurance aspect. Now we have a universal safety net delivered entirely through the Medicare system. They wanted a better deal for kids, and that has been delivered in spades thanks to the Howard government. Not to pass the government’s legislation would be a low blow to families in need, and I call on the Senate to pass the legislation this week.

Medicare: Reform

Mr CREAN (2.13 p.m.)—My question is again to the Minister for Health and Ageing. I refer to his answer to my first question, in which he ruled out increasing the patient rebate for all Australians. Minister, does this mean that the government has now abandoned the founding principle of Medicare—its universality—and has replaced it with a means tested, two-tiered system?

Mr ABBOTT—Let me make it very clear to the Leader of the Opposition: Medicare never meant universal bulk-billing. The Leader of the Opposition is peddling a cruel illusion to pretend that it did. What Medicare always meant was universal access to affordable, high-quality health care and—

Mr Crean interjecting—

The SPEAKER—The Leader of the Opposition has asked his question.

Mr ABBOTT—that is what this package delivers.

Taxation: Income Tax

Mrs BRONWYN BISHOP (2.14 p.m.)—My question is addressed to the Treasurer. Would the Treasurer inform the House of the government’s plans to review the administrative requirements of the personal income tax system?

Mr COSTELLO—I thank the honourable member for Mackellar for her question. I can inform the House that today the government is announcing a review of aspects of the self-assessment system of the income tax
system. This will be looking at the question of whether we have struck the right balance between protecting the rights of individual taxpayers and protecting the revenue. There have been criticisms in the past as to the uncertainties which come from the self-assessment system. The self-assessment system was introduced in 1992 by the previous government. It means that not all tax returns are audited, but there is a capacity after a person has self-assessed for matters to be reopened. Some taxpayers say that this leads to unreasonable delay or unreasonable uncertainty. In the light of that, the government will commission a review. As part of that review, which will be conducted by the Treasury, a discussion paper will be put out early next year identifying key issues to be looked at.

There was a report in one of today’s newspapers saying that the government was reviewing the question of the income tax threshold and work related expenses. That is not part of this review. Those issues have been looked at on occasions over the years, but they are not something that is currently being reviewed by the government. What is being reviewed by the government is the self-assessment system. In addition to that, the government announced, through Senator Coonan, on Friday that it will be looking at the general interest charge, particularly in relation to certain arrangements that have been the subject of controversy. They are the matters that are under investigation.

Medicare: Reform

Ms GILLARD (2.16 p.m.)—My question is to the Minister for Health and Ageing, and I refer to the $266 million for the so-called safety net—the minister’s bandaid. Can the minister confirm that the money allocated for this supposedly sweeping measure comprises just 0.8 per cent of the entire Commonwealth health budget? Can the minister confirm that nearly 30 per cent of this bandaid money—$71 million—will be chewed up in administration and systems establishment costs, leaving a mere half of one per cent of the Commonwealth health budget for this so-called safety net?

Mr ABBOTT—I am not going to quibble with the member for Lalor’s arithmetic, but let me say that the new MedicarePlus safety net is an important structural improvement to Medicare. Just so that the member for Lalor is in no doubt about the situation that some families face, currently some 50,000 concession card holders face out-of-pocket MBS expenses of $500 in a single year. Some 30,000 Australian families face out-of-pocket MBS expenses of more than $1,000 in a single year. These people should not be left in the lurch; they should be protected by a stronger safety net. That is why members opposite should pass this legislation.

Medicare Reform: Rural and Regional Australia

Mr HARTSUYKER (2.19 p.m.)—My question is addressed to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Transport and Regional Services. Would the Deputy Prime Minister inform the House how the government’s MedicarePlus package will provide improved medical services for people in regional Australia?

Mr ANDERSON—I thank the honourable member for his question and acknowledge his very real interest in health outcomes for rural areas. I also take this opportunity to thank the Minister for Health and Ageing for his work on this issue and his wide consultation—and his willingness to take into account the particular needs of different parts of the country. As has been commented on, we are aiming at having another 1,500 doctors and 1,600 nurses across Australia by 2007. Many of those will, of course, find their way into rural and regional areas,
largely because of the various ways in which the package has been constructed. That will make a very substantial difference in those areas where it is hard to access medical practitioners, and indeed nurses as well. For one thing, the pressure on heavily worked rural doctors will be eased by the nurse initiative, which I think is very much to be welcomed. In addition to that, rural doctors working as surgical assistants—or GP proceduralists, as they are known—will be reimbursed up to $10,000 a year to help maintain their skills.

There is nothing like endorsements from people in the field. I note that Dr Sue Page, the President of the Rural Doctors Association, recognised that this was a very valuable highlight indeed. There is nothing more important than having those GP proceduralists in country areas where you cannot get ready access to specialists. This will make a real difference to their willingness to continue providing proceduralist services and to new doctors being able to undertake them in the future. In addition to that, the cutting of red tape in relation to the immigration system in pursuit of another 725 foreign trained doctors by 2007 has been welcomed by ACRRM, the Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine, and the increased rural retention payments will continue for another four years to reward the commitment of GPs who provide services to rural and remote communities for lengthy periods of time. I think it is very important—and testimony, again, to the fact that the government listens—that the 234 new medical school places will see periods of up to three years of postgraduate training undertaken by medical students recognised in meeting their bonding requirements. That too, I think, will move a lot more young doctors into country areas. As we know, when they have sampled country life—gotten over their initial concerns and understood what it is like—many of them will then stay.

But we hear constant talk from the ALP about the universality of Medicare and not developing a two-tiered health system in this country. If ever there was developed a two-tiered health system in Australia, it was the country-city split under Labor. We have known for decades that, if you want a decent supply of doctors and allied health workers in country areas, you have to train a decent number of kids from country and rural areas. Labor let the intake of our medical schools get down to about four or five per cent. Under the packages we have put in place, that is up around 25 or 26 per cent, which will give us the supply of doctors and health care workers that we will need in the future. It is a dramatic improvement and gives the lie to any accusations about our commitment to decent health care for all Australians, regardless of where they live.

Medicare: Reform

Mr BRERETON (2.23 p.m.)—My question is to the Minister for Health and Ageing. I refer to his recent statement in the Sydney Morning Herald that:

... a family with two children on $50,000 a year, for example, would be entitled to ... expect to be bulk-billed ...

Minister, isn’t it true that the government’s package provides no additional incentives for doctors to bulk-bill either parent in a family on $50,000 or their dependent children if they are over the age of 16?

Mr ABBOTT—I would make the point, in response to the member for Kingsford-Smith, that bulk-billing is a function of two factors: first, financial incentives, and financial incentives to bulk-bill will be significantly improved under this package; and, second, the supply of doctors, and the supply of doctors will be dramatically improved under this package. In fact, the supply of general practitioners will go up by almost 10 per cent as a result of this package. Certainly,
whatever difficulties there may be in some places, people living in the electorate of Kingsford-Smith enjoy, under the policies of this government, a bulk-billing rate of 88.7 per cent.

**Medicare: Reform**

Mr LLOYD (2.24 p.m.)—My question is addressed to the Minister for Ageing. Would the minister inform the House how the government’s MedicarePlus package will provide better access to medical care for residents of aged care homes in my electorate of Robertson and throughout Australia?

Ms JULIE BISHOP—I thank the member for Robertson for his question and acknowledge his interest in the wellbeing of older Australians who need care—not only in his electorate but across Australia. MedicarePlus will introduce an initiative that will provide better access to medical care for residents in aged care facilities—firstly, through a new Medicare benefit schedule item and, secondly, through grants to general practitioners. MedicarePlus will support doctors to care for residents in aged care facilities through a new Medicare benefit schedule item which makes comprehensive medical assessments far more accessible—that is, more residents in aged care facilities will be able to obtain this assessment.

The Howard government introduced health assessments in 1999, and to date more than 560,000 older Australians have had access to the assessments. However, I have found in the last few weeks as I have travelled to various electorates, including Calare—I visited the member for Calare—Paterson, Ballarat, Aston, Flinders, Pearce, Melbourne Ports and, this morning, the electorate of Fraser, that health assessments have a very high satisfaction rating amongst consumers and GPs and that they provide a very valuable way of identifying not only a person’s physical but also their mental and sociological health and wellbeing. Under MedicarePlus, all doctors will be able to undertake a comprehensive medical assessment of both new and existing aged care residents. That will attract a Medicare rebate of about $140 per resident, irrespective of their age—and that is an important change.

Also, funding of up to $8,000 a year will be available to GPs who provide routine care to residents in aged care facilities and who undertake urgent and after-hours care and who also work with aged care facilities to improve quality standards. In order to access this assistance, all an aged care home needs to do is work with its local division of general practice. In fact, those divisions will be funded with a dedicated resource—a person who will work with the aged care facility on this issue.

This MedicarePlus initiative underscores our commitment to caring for older Australians, but interestingly I have not heard a word from Labor on this initiative. I would like to know what Labor’s policy is on the MedicarePlus initiative for ageing Australians and for older Australians who are in residential aged care. In fact, I would like to know what Labor’s policy on aged care in any area is—I have not heard a word from them. This compares with the Howard government, which is committed to ensuring that accessible and quality care is available to older Australians throughout this country.

**Medicare: Reform**

Ms GILLARD (2.28 p.m.)—My question is to the Minister for Health and Ageing. I refer to the Prime Minister’s statements that GPs will get an additional $15,000 to $20,000 from his ‘MedicareMinus’ package. Given that a GP provides an average of 7,000 patient services a year, doesn’t this confirm that the government is planning on a bulk-billing rate of only 50 per cent?
Mr ABBOTT—No, it certainly does not. The costings are based on existing rates of bulk-billing. That is the way that the costings are done—on existing rates of bulk-billing. Existing rates of bulk-billing provide bulk-billing in the order of 68 per cent. In fact, in the electorate of Lalor, under this government's policies, the bulk-billing rate is 78.4 per cent.

Immigration: People-Smuggling

Mr TOLLNER (2.29 p.m.)—My question is addressed to the Minister for Foreign Affairs. Following the recent case of the Minasa Bone, would the minister update the House on Australia's ongoing regional cooperation, particularly with Indonesia, to combat people-smuggling, and are there any alternative views?

Mr DOWNER—I thank the honourable member for Solomon for his question and for the interest he shows in this issue. He is a strong supporter of the government's border protection policy. The point about the policy is that the sheer scale of the crime of people-smuggling does demand a serious response. It is estimated that four million people are smuggled or trafficked across international borders each year. We are working very actively with other countries, in particular the countries in our region, to shut down this criminal activity. We do not want to leave in place incentives for this activity to continue.

In answer to the honourable member's question, I particularly refer to the regional cooperation arrangements we have had in place with Indonesia since 2000. They have allowed the International Organisation for Migration to care for potential illegal immigrants and the UNHCR to process asylum claims. Since 2000, more than 3,900 people have been processed in this way. That is 3,900 people who could have come to Australia illegally if it had not been for the cooperation that we have had. The SIEV14 case again demonstrated that regional cooperation arrangements are working. Those arrangements ensure that bona fide refugees have access to international protection, but they also ensure that smugglers are going to be thwarted. Our arrangements with Indonesia, as well as our offshore processing centres in Nauru and on Manus Island in Papua New Guinea, have sent a clear message to the people smugglers that Australia is closed to this evil business. The fact that only two boats have made it to Australia in the last two years is an illustration of the enormous success of the policy.

Let me also say that the Bali process—the ministerial conferences that took place in 2002 and 2003—has produced practical activities which have improved the broader cooperation around the region. So far, 19 regional countries have adopted legislation to make people-smuggling and/or trafficking a crime, and there are 12 that are still actively considering doing that. The fact is, the government has a strong policy. It is a tough policy, but the point about it is that it is an effective policy. Are there any alternatives? There is a simple alternative. There is the alternative of the opposition, which is to be weak on people-smuggling and to have incentives in place, in effect, by saying they would not be tough. That will encourage people smugglers to deliver people to Australia. It is as simple as that.

Mr Crean interjecting—

Mr DOWNER—The Leader of the Opposition interjects with great gusto, but I noted that he had a doorstop interview in London on 13 November and he was asked if he wanted illegals sent back before processing, and he replied 'No. I think what we have to do is assess whether they are genuine or not'—in other words: Everybody can come to Australia. Let us leave the door open to the people smugglers. But what was interest-
Medicare: Bulk-Billing

Ms BURKE (2.33 p.m.)—My question is to the Minister for Health and Ageing. Is the minister aware that the bulk-billing rate in the electorate of La Trobe has fallen to just 62.6 per cent, a fall of nearly 20 per cent in just the last three years? Has the minister provided his colleague the member for La Trobe with a guarantee that bulk-billing rates will now increase, making it easier for families in suburbs like Berwick and Emerald to find a doctor that bulk-bills?

Mr ABBOTT—Let me make it very clear to the member for Chisholm that the government does not determine who gets bulk-billed; doctors and patients determine who gets bulk-billed. That has always been the case.

Honourable members interjecting—

The SPEAKER—When a Member is speaking, no Member may converse aloud or make any noise or disturbance to interrupt the Member.

The minister has the call.

Mr ABBOTT—As the political architect of Medicare, Dr Neal Blewett, repeatedly made very clear, doctors have a choice. They can bulk-bill their patients—and he said that this would be particularly the case for pensioners and other needy people—or they can charge a fee and then the patients can get back 85 per cent of the schedule fee from Medicare. So this government’s position on bulk-billing is exactly the same position as that of the political father of Medicare, Dr Neal Blewett. Let me make this point very clear to the member for Chisholm. Every bulk-billing doctor will be better off under this government’s package. Every doctor who is currently bulk-billing will have a greater Medicare income as a result of this package, and many doctors who are not currently bulk-billing will have significant incentives to go back to bulk-billing. So the bulk-billing rate in Chisholm, which is currently 73.8 per cent, may very well go up under this package.

Immigration: Border Protection

Mr KING (2.36 p.m.)—My question is addressed to the Attorney-General. Is the Attorney aware of comments linking unauthorised boat arrivals with possible terrorist acts or the entry of terrorists? Would the Attorney-General inform the House of measures taken by the government to protect our borders and our national security?

Mr Martin Ferguson interjecting—

The SPEAKER—I remind the member for Batman of standing order 55.

Mr RUDDOCK—I thank the honourable member for Wentworth for his question because I am aware of a number of statements that have been made suggesting that unauthorised boat arrivals on our shores pose a threat to our national security. I might also say that I am also aware of a number of statements suggesting that boats do not pose a threat to national security. The problem of course with those who make these statements is that they are all from the one party—and the statements sometimes come from the same person. For instance, on 9 November, the shadow Attorney-General said on the Sunday program:

...they could be carrying terrorists. To say to a boatload look, if you’re a terrorist and you want to come into the country come in to one of the small islands to the north of Australia, because we really can’t protect it, is quite frankly surrender.
The next day, on 6PR, he said:
I think it is fanciful to suggest that terrorists are going to come out here and claim asylum status. Why? Because they would be detained for a period of time under our laws.
The contradictions, of course, go on, because members opposite have been suggesting from time to time that Australia is not exposed to risk from terrorists. Many comments of that sort were made.

Ms Roxon interjecting—

The SPEAKER—The member for Gelibbrand is warned!

Mr RUDDOCK—On 25 September 2001, the then opposition leader, the member for Brand, said on Lateline:
...there is more and more of an understanding that terrorists don’t arrive on a hit-and-miss process by boats.

Ms King interjecting—

The SPEAKER—The member for Ballarat is warned!

Mr RUDDOCK—We know in a speech reportedly at an ALP function at Rooty Hill last Saturday night, the member for Brand, commenting on fishing boats in our northern waters, is reported as saying:
Imagine if any of those boats carried terrorists with a mind to roll out a few sea mines over the side.
So you see that there is a very significant element of confusion amongst the opposition in relation to how these issues ought to be pursued. There is no confusion on this side. We have always made it clear that we need to have a strong and very determined message on border protection. We have sought to put that in place through the measures that have ensured that people who arrive in Australia without authority are properly detained and, if they are not able to establish a proper basis for being in Australia, they are removed from Australia.

Secondly, we have been able to put in place measures that have ensured that people who seek to come here and arrive at excised places can be removed elsewhere—either returned to where they have come from or, in the case of those whom we cannot safely return, taken to an offshore centre for processing. Those messages have been particularly profound in terms of the effect they have had on people-smuggling issues. I would have to say that terrorists would have to be very mindful that it would be highly unlikely that they were going to reach Australia, with the measures that we have put in place to ensure that if they were going to get onto boats, as the opposition has been alluding to, they would not be successful. The range of measures that we have implemented has achieved just that. Let me just make it very clear: if the Labor Party are serious about national security issues and protecting the Australian community as a whole, there will be a range of further measures that they can look at to deal with those questions.

When it comes to the Senate, they can also give us the appropriate powers to efficiently and effectively list terrorist organisations.

Immigration: People-Smuggling

Mr McCLELLAND (2.41 p.m.)—My question is to the Attorney-General. Can the Attorney-General confirm that the only consequence for the crew of the Minasa Bone, which was recently engaged in people-smuggling, was a free tow by the Australian Navy back to Indonesia, followed by their unconditional release and the release of the boat? I ask the Attorney-General: what is the point of having this parliament pass strong laws against people-smuggling, when it is apparently no longer the Howard government’s policy to prosecute people smugglers who crew boats such as the Minasa Bone?

Mr RUDDOCK—Let me help the person who appears to be the new spokesman for
the Labor Party on these issues, because I notice that the shadow minister for immigration, when she was asked to comment on these matters—

Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER—The Attorney-General will resume his seat. The Attorney-General had and has the call. The courtesy expected to be extended to everybody under standing order 55 will be extended to him.

Mr RUDDOCK—I notice that the member for Gellibrand, when she was asked to comment on these issues, said:

Now is not an appropriate time for border protection.

I thought that was the most remarkable statement that I had ever heard.

Ms Roxon—Where did you hear that?

Mr RUDDOCK—On ABC radio in Adelaide. Let me make it abundantly clear: as far as this side of politics is concerned, border protection is pre-eminent at all times. Let me make that very clear.

Mr Crean interjecting—

The SPEAKER—The Attorney-General will resume his seat. The Leader of the Opposition chooses to deliberately defy the chair. If he persists in this manner, I will have no choice but to warn him.

Mr Crean—Mr Speaker, I rise on a point of order which goes to relevance. The minister was asked why he let the people smugglers go.

The SPEAKER—The Leader of the Opposition will resume his seat. Let me remind all members of the House that, under any form of the House, the Attorney-General not only has the call but also has not concluded his answer. The point of order relating to relevance has no standing at all.

Mr RUDDOCK—The most important aspect of border protection has been to be able to return people who arrived in Australia without lawful authority to where they came from. The most important measure in terms of impacting upon the perception as to whether or not you are going to get to Australia is to be able to get people back. If you are going to get them back, you want them to be gotten back safely. Some of the reasons that people have been taken to offshore processing is that the vessels were not in a fit state for them to be returned. For that reason—

Mr Martin Ferguson interjecting—

The SPEAKER—The member for Batman is warned!

Mr RUDDOCK—people on some vessels have been transferred to offshore processing. But it has sent a very clear message to people smugglers that they are not succeeding when people have been returned. They have not succeeded if they have not come to Australia. Let me make it very clear: if you are going to return people, you need to return them safely; if you are going to strip the boats of the crew, then you have no prospect of being able to guarantee or assure that people will be able to get back safely.

Tourism: White Paper

Mr LINDSAY (2.46 p.m.)—My question is addressed to the Minister for Small Business and Tourism. Will the minister inform the House how the tourism industry has responded to the government’s $235 million tourism initiative to promote Australia as a destination to Australians and overseas markets? Is the minister aware of any other policies or comments on the white paper?

Mr HOCKEY—I thank the member for Herbert for his question. He and many others warmly welcomed the announcement by the Prime Minister of the most significant tourism package ever delivered in Australia. I have to disappoint the House and say that the first response was a little disappointing. The
response from the shadow minister for tourism, the member for Hunter, was disappointing, as he said, ‘The blueprint falls short.’ He went on to criticise the content and size of the package.

I am here to inform the House that that is not the view of the Queensland Labor tourism minister, who welcomed the paper, or the view of the Western Australian Labor tourism minister, who said that the paper would open up areas of Western Australia to the international market and that Western Australia was poised to take advantage of the strategies outlined in the white paper. It was not the view of the Tasmanian Labor Premier, who noted the genuine intention to drive significant reform for the tourism industry at the national level. And it was not the view of the Chairman of the Victorian Tourism Industry Council, one John Button, who said it could:

... mitigate against future shocks by making the sector more responsive to emerging trends and opportunities.

The disappointment was not shared by the tourism task force, which hailed it as a significant package, or the National Tourism Alliance, the tourism industry forum, the Australian Tourism Export Council, the Hotel, Motel and Accommodation Association of Australia, the Queensland Tourism Industry Council or the Restaurant and Caterers Association. They all praised the tourism white paper.

There was one more association which also praised it. The World Tourism Organisation has just become a part of the United Nations and it met recently in Beijing—140 tourism ministers from around the world. The Chairman of the World Tourism Organisation put out a press release from Madrid and said:

As a government tourism strategy paper, the Australian document has undoubtedly raised the standards and set new benchmarks. The tourism white paper will be widely studied and will influence thinking and policy making in many countries.

I table that document. What was the response to all of that support by the member for Hunter? The member for Hunter said to AAP:

I think the gushing response of the sector was close to sickening.

Here is a tip for the member for Hunter: it does not matter what he thinks of the tourism industry; what matters is what the tourism industry thinks of him.

Education: Funding

Ms MACKLIN (2.49 p.m.)—My question is to the Minister for Education, Science and Training. Is the minister aware the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Melbourne, Professor Gilbert, likened the government’s university changes to those of ‘authoritarian regimes that fear strong, independent universities’. Minister, isn’t it true that the changes so far announced do not remove the authoritarian elements of the legislation and that the minister would still be given unprecedented powers over what universities teach or students learn?

Mr Ross Cameron—This is an argument!

Ms MACKLIN—Isn’t Professor Gilbert right when he says, ‘If you want to confront universities, if you want to insult their intelligence, you come up with this package’—

Mr Ross Cameron—Mr Speaker, this is a speech.

The SPEAKER—Order! The member for Parramatta!

Ms MACKLIN—and, ‘I think it has to be withdrawn, almost as an act of goodwill?’

Dr NELSON—I thank the member for Jagajaga for her question and for pointing out to the House that today this government introduced legislation before the Senate that will transform Australia’s higher education
and, in doing so, provide a world-class foundation for the economic and social growth and development of Australia. The government is proposing to invest over 10 years more than $10.6 billion of extra public money in universities, $1½ billion of extra money in the first four years, expanding HECS places, scholarships for students, their living expenses, and a whole variety of reforms to support regional and rural universities at the same time as increasing the core funding available to universities themselves.

In fact it is interesting that the Labor Party, which has refused to be a constructive participant in the whole debate about the future of Australia’s higher education sector, has taken the easy path of adopting three-quarters of the government’s policy. It has opened the taxpayers’ chequebook and basically put a tax on the mining industry to fund its policy. It is a Labor Party that cannot even do its sums. According to the federal Department of Finance and Administration, it has undercosted its policy to the tune of a minimum $260 million. The same Labor Party now belatedly seeks to be a player in this very important debate.

I am asked about the attitudes of vice-chancellors. I point out to the House that today the incoming president of the Australian Vice-Chancellors’ Committee has issued a media release. In part, Professor Di Yerbury said:

We are prepared to go to the wire on this one. It is imperative that everyone understands where our focus lies and is aware that we are forcefully articulating our position to those who can provide the best outcome for the future of higher education in Australia.

We cannot stress enough, the absolute urgency of the legislation being dealt with this year.

....it is time for the direction and future of our education system to be clearly defined.

... we are at a Crossroads and it is now imperative that we move our sector in the right direction and provide the best possible opportunities for the future of education in our country.

In relation specifically to the matter that is raised by the Labor Party, it is entirely a matter for Australian universities as to what courses are offered in universities. But for the Australian taxpayer, who this year will put in excess of $6.8 billion of public money into universities, it is critically important, going into the future, that the taxpayers through the minister and the government of the day decide whether or not some courses will be funded.

It needs to be put to the Labor Party that, at the moment in Australia, you have university courses in aromatherapy, the paranormal, skepticism, golf course management, surfboard riding and make-up application for drag queens. The Labor Party in the future may well want to absent the stage in deciding what will be funded in a university but, on behalf of the workers of Australia, this government will not.

Environment: Murray River

Mr FORREST (2.54 p.m.)—My question is addressed to the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry. Would the minister, in his capacity as Chair of the Murray-Darling Basin Ministerial Council, advise the House how farmers, irrigators and conservationists have reacted to the council’s recent agreement on new environmental flows for the Murray River?

Mr TRUSS—I am delighted to report to the member for Mallee and indeed the House that on 14 November the Murray-Darling Basin Ministerial Council agreed to a historic first step towards restoring the environmental health of the Murray system. The state Labor governments have agreed with the Commonwealth on a regime to improve the water flows and, particularly, on six iconic sites which should be given priority in
the use of environmental water to improve the health of the system.

These sites will use an average of around 500 gigalitres a year—that is more than the entire size of the Sydney Harbour—but it will be provided in a carefully managed way to deliver real outcomes. What has been remarkably successful about this agreement is that, even though a very significant amount of water will be made available, it will be done without compulsory acquisition on a ‘no regrets’ basis. Essentially, it will come from improved management arrangements, new engineering works, water saving efficiencies on farms and the purchase of some water from willing sellers. This is a historic advance. It has been done in a great spirit of cooperation and has been warmly welcomed by irrigators, farm industry bodies and communities around the nation.

That cooperation has of course been minus one obvious party—and that is the opposition. In the lead-up to the debate, the opposition spokesman was going around trying to lobby the states to get them to vote against and oppose this Commonwealth initiative. Labor are the only ones left in the country who are still mindlessly pursuing this idea that we should let 1,500 gigalitres flow down the river, not telling anybody where it is coming from, where it is going to or who is going to pay for it. It is significant to note that this 500 gigalitres agreed to by the Commonwealth and the states will achieve a whole lot more than Labor could ever have achieved with their 1,500 gigalitres. By carefully managing the water, we will deliver real outcomes in a way that is a win-win—a win for the environment and a win for the local community. This is a remarkable first step forward and leaves the Labor opposition completely out in the wilderness when it comes to real action on environmental reform.

Education: Higher Education

Ms MACKLIN (2.57 p.m.)—My question is again to the Minister for Education, Science and Training. Is the minister aware that, despite the government’s announced changes to its higher education legislation, released last week, another senior vice-chancellor, the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Sydney, Professor Brown, still does not support the bill? Isn’t it true that, when asked if the government should now walk away from the package, Professor Brown said, ‘without further modification that would be true’? Why haven’t the authoritarian elements of the legislation that give the minister for education unprecedented powers over what universities teach or students learn been removed?

Dr NELSON—The Australian Labor Party, having refused for more than a year to constructively engage in any serious discussion—to which the Leader of the Opposition now laughs—about the future of university education in this country, now seeks to come in and have some sort of argument about fine technical detail. In his opening remarks at a forum in the University of Western Sydney last week, Professor Brown said, ‘Yes, I want the package to be passed.’

What the Labor Party needs to be told repeatedly is that the Australian Vice-Chancellors’ Committee and, in particular, the Group of Eight, of which Professor Brown is a key member, are in Canberra this afternoon for the next two days for one reason and one reason only, and that is to specifically lobby those members of the parliament who wish to constructively engage in discussion on Australia’s future in education—and that does not include the Labor Party. As far as the Labor Party is concerned, whilst he is not a professor—though I think there is some merit, in terms of the sorts of courses the Labor Party would have funded,
in making him a professor—the member for Werriwa, when quoted in the Daily Telegraph on 18 December 2000, said of the Labor Party, ‘We need to stopponcing around with education reform.’ Hear, hear!

Employment: Work for the Dole

Mr TICEHURST (2.59 p.m.)—My question is directed to the Minister for Employment Services. Can the minister inform the House of the primary aims of the Howard government’s Work for the Dole program? Is he aware of any alternative policies?

Mr BROUGH—I thank the member for Dobell for his question and his obvious interest in all things to do with employment and particularly Work for the Dole. I inform the House, and make it unequivocal, that Work for the Dole is a mutual obligation program that was commenced by this government that was put in place to ensure that those people who are receiving welfare payments actually, as the name says, work for what they receive—work for the dole. There is no apology from this side of the House for this program. It is a successful program, one that has been welcomed by the public around Australia and one that has added over 38,000 man years of work to this community and to this nation and to individuals.

I am asked whether there are any alternative policies. When I put a press release out during the week suggesting to the Leader of the Opposition that perhaps he could once and for all give an unequivocal policy position on any one item, and particularly on Work for the Dole, it was in fact the member for Grayndler who responded when on 2SM he said, ‘Work for the Dole in its current form should be dismantled.’ He did not agree with the name and he did not agree with its policy initiatives. In other words, get rid of the program as it stands, get rid of the fine work that is being done and get rid of the opportunities that it has provided.

Mr Crean—It makes it harder to get people work.

Mr BROUGH—The Leader of the Opposition interjects. The fact is, although the principal objective of Work for the Dole is mutual obligation, if you take the closest thing to it that the Leader of the Opposition put in place when he was in government, this program provides a 50 per cent greater opportunity to get work than the Labor government provided—a 50 per cent better chance. A recent study by Professor Neville from the University of New South Wales concluded that Work for the Dole actually improved participants’ opportunities, and he went on to say that Australia has a compulsory work experience program which is more successful than similar schemes overseas.

The last word should be given to one of the member for Dobell’s own constituents, who was reported in the Central Coast Herald on Friday, 21 November. I would like to read a couple of paragraphs out of this particular news item. It says, ‘Before he got started on the Work for the Dole program Stuart was not keen on the idea. He has had to change his mind. He has come out of the program run by the Oasis Youth Centre in Wyong feeling positive about the contribution he has made to the community and the sorts of skills he has been able to use and acquire. He completed a graphic design degree last year.’

This is a Work for the Dole participant who completed a graphic design degree last year and who was unable to find work. He said that the program, which was nothing like what he had come to expect through media reporting—and we would expect that when we hear the drivel from the members opposite—has helped him to brush up his skills. In other words, it has made him more employable. Work for the Dole continues to work for individuals and this country.
Mr Howard—Mr Speaker, I ask that further questions be placed on the Notice Paper.

MEMBERS

Mr Howard (Bennelong—Prime Minister) (3.03 p.m.)—On indulgence, I welcome back after an unhappy accident the member for Lindsay. I also say on behalf of all of his colleagues that we wish the member for Hume, Alby Schultz, who has had a very unpleasant accident, a very full and total recovery.

PERSONAL EXPLANATIONS

Ms Macklin (Jagajaga) (3.04 p.m.)—Mr Speaker, I wish to make a personal explanation.

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

Ms Macklin—Yes.

The Speaker—Please proceed.

Ms Macklin—On 17 November, the <em>Herald Sun</em> ran a story entitled, ‘Pressure on uni spots: 30,000 may miss tertiary study,’ in which I am quoted as saying:

These latest figures show just how hard it will be for VCE students who are just finishing to secure a university place next year. A lot of people who worked extremely hard will be very disappointed. It’s a terrible waste of time.

The last part of that quote is not correct. What I actually said was, ‘It’s a terrible waste of talent.’

Mr McClelland (Barton) (3.04 p.m.)—Mr Speaker, I wish to make a personal explanation.

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

Mr McClelland—Yes.

The Speaker—Please proceed.

Mr McClelland—I was misrepresented by the Attorney-General because he selectively and partially quoted me. The record of the 9 November interview referred to by the Attorney-General clearly shows that my comments were in the context of the need for an Australian coastguard to protect Australia from maritime criminal incursions generally. Indeed, the quote was:

... these boats could be carrying drugs; they could be carrying arms. They could be at the behest of people-smugglers. Indeed, they could be carrying terrorists.

At no stage did I assert that terrorists or for that matter drug-runners or gun-runners would purport to be asylum seekers.

Ms Roxon (Gellibrand) (3.05 p.m.)—Mr Speaker, I wish to make a personal explanation.

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

Ms Roxon—Yes, also by the Attorney-General.

The Speaker—Please proceed.

Ms Roxon—the Attorney-General in answer to a question today misquoted me in claiming that I said that I did not think that it was an appropriate time to protect our borders. In fact, transcripts from all interviews on the day that the minister has referred to previously in his press releases show that his comments are inaccurate, wrong and quite misleading—as seems to be the minister’s style.

Mr Ruddock (Berowra—Attorney-General) (3.06 p.m.)—Mr Speaker, I wish to make a personal explanation.

The Speaker—Does the Attorney-General claim to have been misrepresented?

Mr Ruddock—I do, just now.

The Speaker—The Attorney-General may proceed.

Mr Ruddock—I do not seek to quote people inaccurately; I do it with information that is published, and I am sure the ABC does not misquote people—
Ms Roxon—Is it a people-smuggling task force?

The SPEAKER—The chair has exercised an extraordinary amount of tolerance this afternoon, as the member for Gellibrand will be particularly aware, I trust. And I hope the acute consciousness continues tomorrow.

Mr Latham—Mr Speaker, I rise on a point of order on relevance. The Attorney-General is not going to a matter where he has been misrepresented. In fact, he is engaged in debate now in response to the way in which the member for Gellibrand—

The SPEAKER—The member for Werriwa will resume his seat. I was listening closely to what the Attorney-General had to say, and he understands the constraints of a personal explanation, as indeed do I. He has the call. I expect him to come to the point about how he has been misrepresented.

Mr Ruddock—I am misrepresented when somebody says I have misquoted them. The quote is quite clear on the ABC Online web site:

This is not the right thing to do—
said the honourable member for Gellibrand. It continues:

We don’t think it is the right policy. It is not an appropriate way to protect our borders as the Government keeps saying and we really think it is just a knee-jerk reaction.

I table a copy.

Mr Albanese—On AM on Wednesday, 12 November 2003, the Treasurer stated in an interview:

Well, Mr Albanese is supporting a wealth tax. He went on to say:

By wealth tax I mean death duties and he is advocating the reintroduction of death duties. I did no such thing. The Treasurer made a comment which was accurate and which reflects what I did say. He said:

He makes the point that Australia doesn’t have a wealth tax and it’s one of the few OECD countries that doesn’t, and he’s right about that.

In the latter comment, he was right.

The SPEAKER—The member for Grayndler must indicate only where he was misrepresented.

QUESTIONS TO THE SPEAKER

Questions on Notice

Mr Murphy (3.09 p.m.)—Mr Speaker, under standing order 150, I draw your attention to the fact that questions on notice in my name have been on the Notice Paper for over 60 days. I will go through them very quickly. It has been more than 60 days, and I request your assistance in obtaining a reply. They are: on 8 September, question on notice No. 2339 to the Minister representing the Minister for Justice and Customs; on 9 September, question on notice No. 2357 to the Minister representing the Minister for Justice and Customs; on 10 September, question on notice No. 2366 to the Minister representing the Minister for Communications, Information Technology and the Arts; on 11 September, question on notice No. 2387 to the Attorney-General; and, on 16 September, questions on notice Nos 2406 to the Treasurer. They also include, on 18 September, questions on notice Nos 2445 to 2454 to the Treasurer; question on notice No. 2458 to the Attorney-General; question on notice No. 2459 to the Treasurer; question on notice No.
2462 to the Minister for Transport and Regional Services; question on notice No. 2463 to the Prime Minister; question on notice No. 2464 to the Minister for Transport and Regional Services; question on notice No. 2465 to the Treasurer; question on notice No. 2466 to the Minister for Trade; question on notice No. 2468 to the Minister representing the Minister for Communications, Information Technology and the Arts; question on notice No. 2469 to the Minister for Foreign Affairs; question on notice No. 2471 to the Minister for Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs; question on notice No. 2472 to the Minister for the Environment and Heritage; question on notice No. 2473 to the Attorney-General; question on notice No. 2474 to the Minister representing the Minister for Finance and Administration; question on notice No. 2475 to the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry; question on notice No. 2478 to the Minister representing the Minister for Health and Ageing; and, finally, question on notice No. 2486 to the Minister for Education, Science and Training.

The SPEAKER—I will follow up the matter raised by the member for Lowe as standing order 150 provides.

PERSONAL EXPLANATIONS
Ms O’BYRNE (Bass) (3.11 p.m.)—Mr Speaker, I wish to make a personal explanation.

The SPEAKER—Does the honourable member claim to have been misrepresented?
Ms O’BYRNE—Yes, most grievously.

The SPEAKER—Please proceed.
Ms O’BYRNE—Senator Barnett from Tasmania in his newsletter email to small businesses in Tasmania states that he has called upon me to correct my claim regarding the appalling fall of the bulk-billing rate in Bass, which at that stage was a little over 46.5 per cent. The misrepresentation is that I received no such call, neither verbally or in writing, when I approached Senator Barnett about the call, nor in the media. As bulk-billing has now fallen to 41.5 per cent, I find it offensive.

QUESTIONS TO THE SPEAKER
Questions on Notice
Mr ORGAN (3.12 p.m.)—Mr Speaker, under standing order 150, I ask that you write to the relevant ministers seeking reasons for the delay in answering questions on notice No. 2336 of 8 September, No. 2399 of 15 September, and Nos 2404 and 2405 of 16 September, which have been standing in my name on the Notice Paper for over 60 days now.

The SPEAKER—I will follow up the matter raised by the member for Cunningham as the standing orders provide.

DEPARTMENT OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES: AWARDS
The SPEAKER (3.12 p.m.)—I wish to acquaint the House with a significant award won by the Department of the House of Representatives that I think is a credit to both the Clerk and his staff. The Department of the House of Representatives has received two significant awards in the past two weeks. The department received the Prime Minister’s Silver Award for Excellence in Public Administration. The award was made in recognition of the department’s Building Leadership Capability Project and was awarded at the second annual Institute of Public Administration Australia, IPAA, awards ceremony. The project has improved significantly the department’s delivery of its core functions by developing an extensive and innovative approach in relation to leadership development. The gold award was made to the Australian Customs Service for the process it developed to increase inspection of sea cargo without impeding legitimate trade.
The Department of the House of Representatives also received the Silver Award in the category of Best Federal Government Agency at the inaugural annual awards ceremony for Investors in People organisations. Investors in People is an internationally recognised standard in people management. The department received this award based on the improvement in leadership and the significant cultural change brought about by the process. The Department of the Environment and Heritage achieved the gold award.

I extend my congratulations to all these agencies. These results indicate that a small agency based in one location such as the Department of the House of Representatives, and large agencies facing challenges with staff spread throughout diverse locations, can gain recognition when assessed by the most rigorous external standards. It speaks well for the agencies that serve the Australian parliament and the Australian public. I believe all members of the House would join me in congratulating the staff and officers of the department on this achievement.

Honourable members—Hear, hear!

PETITIONS

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

Medicare: Bulk-Billing

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

The petition of the undersigned shows that we reject the Howard Government’s proposed changes to Medicare. Under the changes many families will not be able to access bulk billing, and Doctors will increase their fees for these visits. Under the Howard Government the rate of bulk billing has reduced by 4.3% since March 2000 while the cost of visiting the Doctor has risen. We therefore request that the House takes urgent steps to restore bulk billing by GPs and reject the Howard Governments plan to end universal bulk billing.

by Mr Albanese (from 515 citizens)

Medicare: Bulk-Billing

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

The petition of the undersigned shows that we reject the Howard Government’s proposed changes to Medicare. Under the changes many more families will not be able to access bulk billing and doctors fees will increase for these visits. Since the election of the Howard Government in 1996 the rate of bulk billing in Victoria has declined by 16%. We therefore 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 Ms Corcoran (from 180 citizens)
by Ms Livermore (from 193 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 need to keep bulk billing for the young families and communities of Western Sydney.
We therefore pray that the House opposes the introduction of an upfront fee for GP visits.

by Mr Laurie Ferguson (from 119 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: We the undersigned object to the Federal Government’s proposed changes to Medicare that will:
• Deny bulk billing for 2 out of 3 Australians
• Increase the cost of basic health care for middle Australia;
• Place further pressure on our public hospital system;
No bulk billing will result in extra GP fees.
Medical treatment and the safeguarding of our children’s health should be a right not an expense.
We therefore pray that the House reverses their decision and considers the Federal Opposition’s plan to save bulk billing and protect Medicare.

by Mr Tanner (from 136 citizens)

Australian Broadcasting Corporation: Funding

To the Honourable the Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives assembled in Parliament:
This petition of certain residents of the state of New South Wales points out to the House that funding cuts to the Australian Broadcasting Corporation have led to cuts to educational programs and news and current affairs and to the ABC’s cadet training program.

These funding cuts promote the destruction of the ABC as an independent news source and reduce its role as an educator.
Educational programs produced by the ABC provide a valuable resource for students and teachers in public schools and colleges across the nation. These programs are particularly important for schools and students in socio-economically disadvantaged communities. “Behind the News” in particular has been an important educational resource for more than 30 years.
Your petitioners therefore ask the House to reverse the funding cuts and restore a level of funding to the ABC to enable it to properly perform its functions as a source of independent news and as an educator.

by Mr Albanese (from 15 citizens)

Medicare: Bulk-Billing

To the Honourable Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives assembled in Parliament:
We, the undersigned call on the Parliament of Australia to:
• Recognise the drastic drop in bulk-billing rates throughout Australia;
• Recognise the effect that increasing healthcare costs place on all families, especially the elderly and disadvantaged;
• Recognise that health care is one of the most important issues facing Australians.
Therefore, we the undersigned, call on the Parliament to
• Reject any legislation that seeks to cut bulk-billing or means test bulk-billing;
• Reject any legislation that increases the cost of prescription drugs;
• Improve and increase bulk-billing rates; and
• Increase the number of doctors in rural and regional Australia
• Inject more money into the public health system in order to reduce waiting lists.

by Mr Danby (from 121 citizens)
We, the undersigned call on the Parliament of Australia to:

- Recognise the nearly $1 billion in cuts to Centrelink this government has imposed;
- Recognise the thousands of complaints Centrelink and Members of Parliament receive about poor service by Centrelink staff; and
- Recognise the thousands of debts created purely by Centrelink administrative error, and through no fault of the customer; and
- Note the damming report by the Commonwealth Ombudsman into the Family Tax Benefit system, which said the system is complete chaos, and stop-gap measures will not work.

Therefore, we the undersigned, call on the Parliament to

- increase funding to Centrelink to improve the service provided the Centrelink customers;
- waive customer debts due solely to Centrelink administrative error; and
- change the Family Tax Payment system to be based on past income, rather than an estimate of future earnings.

by **Mr Danby** (from 163 citizens)

**Terrorism: Suicide Bombings**

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

We, the citizens of Australia, note the practice of suicide bombing as a crime against humanity. Therefore, we call on the House to act immediately to facilitate a debate at the next United Nations conference to prohibit suicide bombing.

We suggest a version of such a convention:

1. To define suicide bombing as a crime that should be prosecuted and punished by the appropriate international courts of justice.
2. Prohibit any ideological, political, religious and other types of propaganda or any activities, which could be conducive to the creation of suicide bombers.
3. Each country should adopt a law, which ensures unconditional implementation of the above paragraphs 1 and 2.

by **Mr Danby** (from 61 citizens)
4. Any country that will not observe or refuse to sign the convention should be subjected to severe political, economic and military sanctions, specified by international laws of non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

by Mr Danby (from 677 citizens)

Medicare: Services
To the Honourable the Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives assembled in Parliament.
The petition of certain electors in the State of Queensland draws to the attention of the House that a Medicare Office is not located in the western suburbs of Logan City.
In the main, these signatures are from residents of the suburbs of Logan, the northern suburbs of Beaudesert Shire and the southern suburbs of Brisbane.
This area has been consistently recognised in consecutive censuses as being amongst the highest population growth areas in the country.
This area contains a large percentage of young families who have indicated that a Medicare Office in the area is important to them. In addition, the residents of this region have indicated that the office should be located in the Grand Plaza Shopping Centre which is a major regional centre and is the hub of retail, community and social interaction for the western suburbs of Logan City Council, together with the residents and signatories to the petition, believes it to be an ideal location for the establishment of this desperately required service.

Your petitioners therefore request the House and, in particular, the Federal Minister for Health and Ageing, Senator the Honourable Kay Patterson, to carefully consider establishing a Medicare Office in the western suburbs of Logan, preferably in the shopping centre precinct known as Grand Plaza.

by Dr Emerson (from 600 citizens)

Family Services: Child Care
To the Honourable Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives assembled in Parliament:

The petition of certain residents of the state of South Australia draws to the attention of the House:

1. That the increasing importance of Family Day Care (FDC) services in the community be recognised as a necessity for out of hours workers, studying parents, disadvantaged families as well as providing the option of children to be cared for in a family based environment;
2. That due to the popular demand of the FDC service and the growing population, FDC schemes are unable to provide placements for new families seeking this high quality care service;
3. That FDC businesses would not function adequately if existing, operational support be removed from family day care co-ordination units.

We therefore request the House to:
1. Increase funding to enable FDC schemes in SA to meet the increasing demand on their services, and
2. Maintain current levels of operational support.

by Mr Martyn Evans (from 1,916 citizens)

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

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-
We, therefore, the individual, undersigned attendees at Waverley Baptist Church, Wheelers Hill, Vic, 3150, petition the House of Representatives in support of the above mentioned Motion.

AND we, as in duty bound will ever pray.

by Mr Griffin (from 7 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 Friendship Club, St Leonard’s Catholic Church, Glen Waverley, Vic 3150, petition the House of Representatives in support of the above mentioned Motion.

AND we, as in duty bound will ever pray.

by Mr Griffin (from 16 citizens)

**Middle East: Israeli-Palestinian Conflict**

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

The petition of certain citizens of Australia points out to the House the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Your petitioners therefore ask the House to call upon the government of Israel to withdraw its armed forces from the West Bank and the Gaza Strip to allow the creation of a viable and independent Palestinian state.

by Mrs Irwin (from 1,506 citizens)

**China: Bears**

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

The petition of certain residents of Australia draws to the attention of the House that approximately 8,000 bears are being kept in cages in China for the purpose of extracting bile for medical purposes and that the cages are so small the bears cannot move, which results in some of them going mad. It is further brought to the attention of the House that the Chinese plan to increase the number of bears, for these purposes, to 40,000.

Your petitioners therefore respectfully ask the House of Representatives to object most strongly to this horrendous and tragic practice and ask that steps be taken to stop it immediately.

by Ms Jann McFarlane (from 16,478 citizens)

**Defence: National Service Medal**

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 issuing of a Commemorative Medal for National Service for periods of ninety days and two to three years part time service in the Citizens Military Force or six months service in the Royal Australian Navy or Royal Australian Air Force in the period 1951 to 1959 and the two year National Service Scheme 1965 -1972, discriminated against the many thousands of service men and women of the Australian Defence Force who have served and will continue to serve voluntarily either full-time or part-time in the defence of our great Nation during the period 1946 to the current present day, many of whom trained national servicemen and have received no medal recognition.

Your Petitioners pray that the House will see fit to do the honourable thing and institute a medal for two years full-time or part-time service in the Australian Defence Force from 1 January 1946 to the present and future servicemen and women who serve and protect our Nation.
by Mr Melham (from 45 citizens)

Roads: Funding

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

The Petition of certain users of the Great Northern Highway, Western Australia, draws to the attention of the House, the poor and unsafe condition of the Highway between Middle Swan and Wubin, Your Petitioners therefore request the House to urgently inject funds over and above that approved under the ¾ budget and forward estimates, to progressively widen, by building passing lanes at 5km intervals to improve traffic flow, and resurface.

by Mrs Moylan (from 6,008 citizens)

Shipping: Nuclear Armed and Powered Vessels

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

We, the undersigned residents of Australia ask that the House of Representatives consider the health and welfare of the present and future residents of this country and the environmental impacts of possible negative impacts relating to the visits of nuclear powered and armed vessels into Australian ports.

Nuclear navies are not welcome here whatever the colour of their flags.

The recent spate of accidents involving nuclear-powered submarines should be enough to convince all governments that the risk to the environment of these floating Chernobyls is a risk we don’t have to take.

Accordingly, we respectfully request that the Parliament legislate to prevent all visits of nuclear armed/powered vessels to Australian ports and waters.

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

by Mr Stephen Smith (from 100 citizens)

Centrelink: Offices

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: We the undersigned object to the Federal Government’s proposal to merge the Fitzroy and Richmond Centrelink offices that will:

- Cause hardship to a significant number of Centrelink clients.
- Disadvantage many people with disabilities who have transport difficulties.  
- Discourage people from pursuing legitimate welfare entitlements.

We therefore pray that the House reverses their decision and considers the Federal Opposition’s call to protect the Fitzroy and Richmond Centrelink offices.

by Mr Tanner (from 123 citizens)

Australian Broadcasting Corporation: Funding

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 removal of Behind the News (BTN) will severely affect the education of upper primary and secondary students.
- That the programme is a valuable resource which allows students to see the world in a way which they understand, providing clear background information about current events and encouraging the development of critical literacy.
- That BTN reaches a wide audience who would otherwise have little or no exposure to news, particularly rural and socio-economically disadvantaged children.
- That the programme is an immensely valuable teaching resource which encompasses a broad range of affairs such as environmental protection, political process, foreign affairs and current events, thus enabling students to develop well informed personal opinions and
encouraging a sense of proactive involvement with the community.

- That the superior quality of the programme ensures it is not only accessible for its target audience but is a resource of great value for foreign teachers of English, and adult and ESL teachers. This attribute contributes to the economic viability of the programme as an exportable commodity for overseas countries seeking insight into the English language and the Australian way of life.

Your petitioners therefore; request that the House take action to provide funding for the ABC to continue to produce BTN, enabling it to continue to play an important part in educating students as it has for the past 31 years.

by Mr Tanner (from 174 citizens)

Trade: Fur Imports

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

This petition, of citizens and residents of Australia, is to call the attention of the House to the international trade of dog and cat fur products and accessories, being sold in Australia.

Humane Society International has investigated and unearthed evidence of the appalling international fur trade, where dogs and cats are cruelly slaughtered by inhumane methods, with animals dying by slow suffocation, hanging, clubbing or beating to death. All these methods involved severe panic, trauma and needless prolonged suffering. More than two million dogs and cats are killed each year for use in the international fur trade.

Your petitioners request the House to send a strong message to this terrible industry, by banning the importation of dog and cat fur products into Australia.

by Mr Truss (from 55 citizens)

Petitions received.

PETITIONS

Responses

The Clerk—Ministerial responses to petitions previously presented to the House have been received as follows:

Environment: Murray-Darling Basin

Mr Christopher Pyne MP
Member for Sturt
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Mr Pyne

I refer to your petition lodged with the Clerk of the House of Representatives on 15 September 2003 concerning the deletion of section 100 of the Constitution and insertion of a new head of power under the Constitution handing control of the Murray-Darling Basin to the Australian Government.

I would like to assure you that the environmental issues facing the Murray-Darling Basin are a high priority for the five State and Territory governments of the Basin and the Australian Government. The Murray-Darling Basin Initiative was established as a partnership between governments and the community to give effect to the 1992 Murray-Darling Basin Agreement. It was established because governments wanted an organisation that transcended the political boundaries between jurisdictions that managed the far-reaching Murray-Darling river catchments as effectively as possible.

The Murray-Darling Basin Ministerial Council is the primary body which brings governments together and provides the policy and direction needed to implement the Initiative. The Murray-Darling Basin Commission is its executive arm, providing advice to Council on a range of matters relating to the Basin’s resources. The Community Advisory Committee, which also advises the Council, is an integral part of the Initiative and reflects the importance of the community-government partnership.

In its early years, the Murray-Darling Basin Initiative focused on promoting the principles of integrated catchment management (ICM) and the development of joint community and government
structures. These have remained key mechanisms for achieving sustainable resource use of the Basin’s natural resources, enabling governments and communities to work together to develop and implement natural resource management policies, strategies and programs. The arrangements also recognise that many Australians have an interest in the Basin and its resources and in some cases these interests are competing.

The Initiative has had many successes. These include the development of policies and strategies for collaborative action in diverse areas such as managing salinity, ecological assets such as floodplain and wetlands, native fish populations and algal blooms. Another important area of activity is the development and implementation of strategic, large scale management plans for the Basin’s resources, which reflect the principles of integrated catchment management.

More recently, the Murray-Darling Basin Ministerial Council, of which I am a member, has been looking at what action may be required to restore the River Murray as a healthy working river. In November 2003, the Council will consider a proposal for a first step towards achieving this objective.

It is expected that this first step proposal will include clear ecological outcomes for a number of significant ecological assets, such as the Chowilla floodplain and the Murray Mouth. The focus on outcomes responds to views presented by the communities during consultation to date. Communities want to know what a first step decision would deliver in terms of real environmental outcomes on the ground.

The process of engaging communities and seeking their input on key issues will continue. In relation to a first step decision I expect this would include their advice on any potential impacts (both positive and negative) and how they might be addressed, and their views on how water might be recovered.

Given the success of the Murray-Darling Basin Initiative to date and progress towards restoring the River Murray as a healthy working river there is no basis for Constitutional amendment.

Thank you for bringing this important issue to my attention.

Yours sincerely

DAVID KEMP

from the Minister for Environment and Heritage, Dr Kemp, to a petition lodged on 15 September by Mr Christopher Pyne (from 393 citizens)

PRIVATE MEMBERS’ BUSINESS

Economy: Infrastructure Development

Mr KING (Wentworth) (3.18 p.m.)—I move:

That this House give consideration to a new program of infrastructure development in cooperation with state and local governments and private enterprise and having regard to:

(1) the primary obligation of States for the maintenance of public infrastructure; and
(2) a reasonable allocation of available resources between city and country areas.

This motion concerns my electorate and, beyond, it concerns the nation. In his speech on strategic leadership a year ago, the Prime Minister identified as one of the deep-seated values common to all Australians ‘having a go’. By this motion—and I thank my colleagues for their support—I identify three new areas of policy development in which I propose, at the start of this new century and millennium, Australia should have a go if we are to continue to grow stronger, more prosperous and more happy as a people over time.

There is no question that accepted Commonwealth priorities, such as economic prosperity and national security, remain paramount. But, as nations change and circumstances fluctuate, legislators, I believe, have a duty to identify and lead where they can on new national concerns. The circumstances that make it appropriate to consider such a program in the area of infrastructure development are: firstly, the significant increase in Australia’s population over the last 30 years, in which our population has almost
doubled, and what can be expected over the next 50 years if Australia continues to be, as I believe it should be, a nation that has a robust immigration program; secondly, the challenges of globalisation, which this government has so successfully taken on since 1996 and which we must assume will continue; and, thirdly, the fact that, through significant fiscal reform, the vertical imbalance that has underscored Commonwealth-state relations in the past and held up significant development has been resolved through the GST and other measures. That last feature, of itself, means that it is now more important than ever that all three levels of government have a precise understanding of the limits of involvement, particularly by the Commonwealth, in infrastructure development. This proposal concerns the country, the city and our national identity.

Infrastructure change in this country, without doubt, must begin with perhaps our greatest national dilemma, which is water. This motion proposes that through Commonwealth leadership at all levels of government there is developed a coordinated, comprehensive policy on water that clarifies property water rights—as the admirable national water initiative of the Deputy Prime Minister does—and restores water flows to our stressed rivers, as proposed by the Wentworth Group of Concerned Scientists. This policy on water should also deal with other related concerns, and these are, in particular, but in no special order: the maintenance of adequate water supplies to our burgeoning cities, the eradication of city ocean outfalls that pollute our oceans, the development of sewage treatment works that recycle water and sewage for agricultural and other uses, the development of a desalination program, the more effective delivery of water to our farms, more sustainable irrigation practices, a plan to stop the shrinkage of artesian basin reserves, and retention of the great water collection areas and their natural heritage—such as the Paroo and the Snowy. Such a program will not be developed overnight, but I propose that sufficient funds be dedicated to a research program through the Department of the Environment and Heritage, with all levels of government in agreement, by no later than 2005.

Most Australians live in our cities. This fact gives rise to special problems of amenity and quality of life linked closely to the urban environment. I therefore propose that Australia develop a national urban policy. For example, in my electorate of Wentworth, the most densely populated electorate in the country, there are new challenges not anticipated by planners a century or so ago and beyond the capacity of local level planners to solve. Public transport on many principal roads has almost ground to a halt during peak periods on weekdays and weekends. Basic road and transport infrastructure is under stress and without new ideas, under the leadership of three levels of government working together with local communities, there will be no change.

In Wentworth, a forum of all three levels of government has recommended consideration of alternative transport solutions, such as light rail. Similarly, under the Naturoll Heritage Trust mark 2, we need stormwater and sewage solutions that assist urban communities and the scarce natural heritage of our cities. There is scope through the department of industry to develop centres of excellence, innovation and specialised employment in partnership with universities and TAFEs.

The final objective in this proposal is to revive what I would loosely call ‘spiritual values’ in society. By these I mean something exogenous, something outside ourselves as individuals, such that we can build a society based around communities and community groups, in which our education is
based on civic values and in which we build a heritage of respect for the aged, those of different backgrounds and even those of different values and religious beliefs, so long as they are prepared to contribute to growing and improving a great Australian nation. This will be a society in which the vision of our artists is respected and in which bureaucracy is not seen to solve all the problems. Problems will be resolved in local areas through a social infrastructure encouraging volunteerism, conservation and heritage and civic values of pride in family and country. This solution calls on parliament to take steps, to go on and build the nation in our third century. I take pride in joining my colleagues in the proposal before the House.

The SPEAKER—Is the motion seconded?

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

Mr MOSSFIELD (Greenway) (3.23 p.m.)—I rise to speak on the private members’ motion moved by the member for Wentworth regarding the need for a new infrastructure program to be called ‘Build the Nation’. Unfortunately this is only half of a good motion, because it is spoiled by ideology and more than just a hint of hypocrisy. I have spoken on a number of occasions in this place of the need for large-scale, nation-building infrastructure programs, so I can agree with the first point of the motion. I believe that the federal government exists to build and maintain the nation. However, the ideology gives itself away with the talk of handing these programs over to the states and to private enterprise. You cannot ‘build the nation’ on a state-by-state, piecemeal basis. When you leave major national infrastructure programs to the states you end up with three different gauges in the railways. It was only with the passage of 100 years and leadership from the federal Labor government that standardisation across the railways came. National leadership on infrastructure has its responsibilities, and by handing everything over to the states the federal government would be abrogating its responsibilities in this area.

If we are to truly build a nation, it will require not only the leadership of the federal government but also ongoing support and drive to see the projects through to the end and to maintain them after. Just one example of where the federal government has failed miserably in this area is happening now in my own electorate and throughout Western Sydney. I speak of the Western Sydney Orbital—or, as it is now known, the M7. This is the last link in the national highway system that stretches over 18,500 kilometres around Australia. It is wholly within the federal government’s jurisdiction to build and maintain, yet this government has completely backed out of its responsibility and forced the New South Wales government and the private road builders to take responsibility for the construction and maintenance of this federal road. As a result of federal government neglect, Western Sydney motorists will be forced to pay a toll of at least $5.50 to drive on the national highway. This government has privatised the national highway.

Major nation-building infrastructure should not be privatised. Nation building and privatisation are two mutually exclusive concepts. Yet that is what this motion suggests we should do: sell off that which builds and maintains our nation. Certainly there is a role for the private sector, but it can be done in a way that does not mean privatisation. The concept of nation building is foreign to the government. If they were truly interested in building our nation or investing in national infrastructure, they would have built the orbital themselves and they would not have slashed millions of dollars from public education. That is why I say this motion has
more than just a hint of hypocrisy about it. The motion before us reads:

That this House give consideration to a new program of infrastructure development in Australia called “Build the Nation” ...

Infrastructure is far more than just buildings or roads, and the infrastructure that needs to be developed in Australia in order to build our future includes things like educational infrastructure. What better way is there to build our nation than by investing in the education of our population, like the Labor government did when it created the University of Western Sydney and some 15 other universities during the 1980s? Yet across the tertiary system some $5 billion has been ripped out of higher education since the election of the Howard government. At the primary and high school levels, the failed and discredited enrolment benchmark adjustment system took millions of dollars from public schools, most of which have never recovered. You cannot ‘build the nation’ without investing in the educational infrastructure that will provide the foundation for our country’s future.

This motion has good intentions. It suggests that we need to build the nation with investment in infrastructure, and I could not agree more. Unfortunately, it is also deeply flawed, mired in ideology and hypocrisy. It abrogates all responsibility by trying to hand everything off to the states, to local councils and to privatisation. It says, ‘We want to build the nation, just as long as we don’t get our hands dirty.’ It does not work that way. The federal government exists to both build and maintain the nation, and it cannot do this if it refuses to take up its responsibilities because it is too busy passing the buck to somebody else.

Mr CIOBO (Moncrieff) (3.28 p.m.)—I was very pleased to second the motion put forward by my good friend the member for Wentworth. In principle, he and I face very similar challenges in our electorates. They are challenges that befall what are increasingly popular areas of Australia. The member for Wentworth spoke of how his electorate is the most densely populated electorate in Australia. I speak from the angle that my electorate of Moncrieff is part of a city that has been Australia’s fastest growing city for the last 30 years and is anticipated to continue to be Australia’s fastest growing city for the next 25 years. This places unique challenges on a city like the Gold Coast. Fifty years ago it was a sleepy hamlet; these days, Gold Coast City is Australia’s sixth largest city, with a net population growth of 15,000 per annum. What is more, that growth shows no sign of abating.

This motion addresses a fundamental aspect of what government policy should be looking at. I commend the member for Wentworth for moving a motion whose essence is building the nation in a cooperative sense between state and local governments and private enterprise, to ensure that we develop and maintain public infrastructure, recognising that there needs to be a reasonable balance between city and country areas. All of this must be maintained within the framework that the primary responsibility—not the sole responsibility—for the provision of public infrastructure sits, sometimes uncomfortably and sometimes comfortably, with state governments. I can speak at a local level for my constituents on the Gold Coast when I say that, because of our growing population, the unique challenges we face are now being felt in very real terms.

It is interesting that this private member’s motion coincides with the release today of a report by the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Economics, Finance and Public Administration that looks at the revamp that is required between federal, state and local relations following an 18-month inquiry into cost shifting. The report is a
unanimous report, which means that it has the support of both the opposition and the government. There are 18 recommendations made in the report, and I would like to highlight a few for the House today. Key among them is the call for an urgent meeting to be held between the Prime Minister, the federal Treasurer, state and territory premiers, chief ministers, treasurers and representatives of local government from each state to develop a federal-state intergovernmental agreement on the roles and responsibilities of local government and to determine funding sources to meet those responsibilities.

The report also recommends that federal-state specific purpose payment agreements require state governments to report on what responsibilities they intend to hand to local government and the volume of funds to be distributed to local government to perform those functions. It further recommends that local government bodies be required to audit the state of their infrastructure and provide status reports to the Commonwealth Grants Commission. The piece de resistance: it recommends a summit on intergovernmental relations be held by COAG in 2005. But the question is: why make these key recommendations as part of the inquiry? In essence, it comes down to one fundamental fact, and that is that there has been increasing cost shifting to local governments, principally by state governments.

To highlight a major problem on the Gold Coast, I will talk about road funding. In the last five or so years, in the period from 1997-98 to 2002, Queensland state government direct spending on council roads fell from $252 million to $234 million—a fall of $18 million—despite the fact that the Beattie Labor government is receiving record amounts of GST and FAGs. What is the federal government doing? I do not believe in throwing barbs unless there is some backup from the federal government. What we see is that federal government spending has increased, from $365 million to $445 million; and, on top of that, the federal government is also providing direct to council funding through the Roads to Recovery program.

There are many pressing concerns in my electorate, and the most fundamental is roads. It is very clear that, when it comes to infrastructure spending, the Queensland government—and it is an analogy for the rest of Australia—is tending to be capital focused on major projects and is not really looking at what local governments need in urban areas. (Time expired)

Mr ADAMS (Lyons) (3.33 p.m.)—Yes, there does need to be more infrastructure programs in Australia, and this was clearly identified in a report of a former House of Representatives committee, the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Primary Industries and Regional Services, of which I was deputy chair, in 2000. It showed that there was very uneven distribution of funds for infrastructure and that there was a need to identify those needs on a national basis and to have a means by which regions could be connected to opportunities for public and private investment and be provided with information from all three levels of government. We identified that at least $20 billion was needed to catch up on all infrastructure across this nation; that is, merely to catch up on, not to expand. That included all infrastructure needs in regional areas for health, education and economic survival.

One of the recommendations in that report was the establishment of a national infrastructure advisory council to facilitate the provision of national infrastructure and to report through COAG to the ministers responsible for regional development. That sort of body could direct and coordinate a proposal such as that which is being suggested. But to lump responsibility on the states is not...
the most economic way to achieve goals, and I also do not believe that it is the primary responsibility of the states to maintain all public infrastructure. The honourable member for Wentworth might read this report, as it comprehensively identified many of the current problems and suggested clear and precise ways of dealing with them. His government has had the report since 2000.

State and local governments can be in a unique position to recommend the best way to approach a particular project but, when it comes to projects such as roads and railways, they have a habit of crossing borders and boundaries—sometimes many boundaries. Then you need federal facilitation to ensure that the whole job is completed. Other recommendations in the report were that the Commonwealth government encourage the states to support regional road planning with all the stakeholders. For example, I am very conscious of some roads that have been developed on boundaries in Tasmania. You get silly outcomes such as a line down the middle of a main road, one side being repaired by one council and the other side by the council next door—and they do not always do the repairs at the same time. Roads have often been used as ‘carrots’ to local government; for example, a state government may say that they will take over road X and do it up if the local government does Y on the other side. I have seen situations where a council road has been done up and the state government have not done up theirs. We need proper guidelines and service obligations to be adhered to by those offering the services to the regions, so that the regions do not become the poor relations of the suburbs.

As for the second part of the motion, on available resources we can only assume that this means that there is an insufficient mix now. I agree with that. We have altogether too few resources allocated to country areas, especially for infrastructure services like Telstra and the ABC, which are suffering from insufficient funds to keep services in the country, let alone expand them.

I was pleased to see ABC NewsRadio extended to Launceston last week, until I heard that it was at the expense of ABC TV reception in the valleys to the west of Launceston in my electorate. That is not good enough. We need more resources allocated to the regions to cope with these changes and allow people to at least keep the services they use and to get access to others—such as broadband, which is limited to the cities in Tasmania.

The honourable member for Wentworth, who moved this motion, comes from a very affluent inner city seat which may not know much about the difficulties that those of us in the bush have to put up with. Even those in the outer suburbs have huge difficulties compared to those who live in the leafy luxury of Woollahra or such places. So what really is the honourable member’s interest in this subject that he has taken on? That is also a question to be asked. The nation at the moment is being built in two classes—those that have and those that have not. We have the information here and we should use this report. (Time expired)

Mr HARTSUYSKER (Cowper) (3.38 p.m.)—It is my pleasure to speak on this motion as it appears in the Notice Paper. From my perspective as the member for Cowper, representing the North Coast, I am very focused on transport and telecommunications as two of the important areas of infrastructure for my region. Telecommunications is a major driver of wealth and prosperity in the bush, as are road infrastructure and transport infrastructure generally. Without the vital link that is our road system, many of the activities that occur in regional and rural areas just could not occur. Every item that is exported from a regional or rural area generally
starts its journey on a local road. The road system is a vital piece of infrastructure. The freight task in this nation is going to double by the year 2020, and the states really need to be looking at the provision of more money for infrastructure. They have received the GST—important growth funding for the states—and they have received a wealth of stamp duty. We would like to see a lot of that money going into vital transport infrastructure, particularly in regional and rural areas. The federal government has been active in the area of transport—

Mr King—The member for Lyons didn’t take that into account.

Mr HARTSUYKER—indeed not—in pioneering AusLink, which is a national strategy for transport aimed at coming up with an integrated approach to total land transport. Also, the federal government has been very active along the east coast of my electorate. The federal government has committed some $600 million to the upgrade of the Pacific Highway for the 10-year period ending 2005-06. Despite the fact that that vital road was designed and built by and is owned and maintained by the state, the federal government has been supporting it.

My focus as a local member is very much on saving lives. Regrettably, on the Pacific Highway there are a number of spots which have claimed the lives of local residents. There is no more important example of that than Wrights Corner, which is near Macksville. Since 2000 there have been some seven fatalities on this very dangerous corner on the Pacific Highway. In the most recent tragedy, on 15 October, two people were killed in a horrific accident involving four vehicles. One of those killed was a local high school teacher, the very much loved and respected Mr Phil Stewart. He was a highly regarded teacher and highly regarded member of the Nambucca Shire community. On 21 October there was a memorial service for Mr Stewart, attended by some 700 people. It certainly highlighted the impact of such tragic road accidents on the families and friends of the victims and on the community generally. I would like to formally record my condolences in the House to the families of those killed in this horrific accident. Following this accident, I held some discussions with Mr Peter O’Neill, the Principal of Macksville High School. He advised me that the Macksville community will soon present a petition to me, which I intend to table in parliament. I understand this petition is going to focus on the need for government at all levels to invest funding in roads with a view to, very importantly, saving lives.

Recently in Macksville there was concern about the issue of the XPT services being cancelled. The state government is again looking at closing down services in rural and regional areas. It is looking at closing down XPT services, bringing more buses onto the Pacific Highway and putting more people at risk on what is a very busy road. But AusLink is looking at improving our general transport infrastructure, removing some of the inefficiencies that currently exist and ensuring that we get cost-effective, efficient transport outcomes that involve not only roads but also a combination of roads and rail. It will certainly be looking at the freight task and the passenger transport task into the future.

I would like to commend the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Transport and Regional Services, Mr John Anderson, for the focus he has maintained on improving our rail network and the ability for rail to transport a higher proportion of the freight task. Getting more freight efficiently onto the rail network will take some of the burden off the Pacific Highway and will make the Pacific Highway less congested by heavy transport vehicles. Mr Anderson has cer-
tainly been working very hard, negotiating with the New South Wales government to come up with an agreement by which the federal government will take a lease on that line, look to invest more money in rail and complement the improvements that are already under way on the Pacific Highway. Certainly in my electorate there is a view that the Pacific Highway is a priority. (Time expired)

Mr JENKINS (Scullin) (3.44 p.m.)—This motion is very timely in the context of independent analysis by organisations such as Engineers Australia and AusCID which have estimated the backlog for infrastructure to be in the order of $20 billion. This debate is not for some analysis of why we have gotten to this situation. Deputy Speaker Adams, in his contribution mentioned the work of a former House of Representatives committee, the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Primary Industries and Regional Services, in investigating infrastructure needs in the rural area. There have been countless inquiries, not only by parliamentary committees but also by a number of other committees, that have indicated this increasing backlog. This backlog arises because we get behind in the renewal and maintenance of infrastructure and because, as the population of Australia grows, we cannot commit resources to the provision of proper infrastructure for that population.

It has to be a shared responsibility. We cannot continue to have debates where there is finger pointing, where there are people saying, ‘It’s the states’ fault,’ or, ‘It’s local government’s fault.’ The national government has to understand that it can play a role not only as a leader but also as a provider. I have argued this constantly. I think there is a capacity for a national government to be involved with communities, whether they are inner urban, outer urban or rural—as has been mentioned in this debate—in the delivery of programs that can address some of these infrastructure needs. This has to be done quickly.

I will take my electorate, an outer urban area in the northern suburbs of Melbourne, as an example. This area has been constantly growing over the last couple of decades. It never wins a gold medal for growth but it is always there on the list of placegetters. The continual pressure in outer urban areas, such as those I represent, is tangible. Let us look at road services. Despite the duplication of Cooper Street and the building of the Craigieburn bypass, there are deficiencies. These could be addressed by building new north-south routes, such as the E6 freeway, and by upgrading and further duplicating roads, such as Plenty Road. East-west private traffic could be improved by proper planning for an outer ring-road—an outer orbital which could connect all the growing and new areas on the outskirts of Melbourne.

We should look at public transport. In my local area heavy rail must be taken beyond Epping to South Morang and Mernda, which are now the developing nodes of population. Epping North, a new estate about to be commenced, must be provided with public transport. Light rail must go beyond McKimmies Road, Mill Park. We must remember that light rail was extended from Bundoora to Mill Park under a federal government program, Building Better Cities, which demonstrated not only what could be achieved but also the need to extend it to South Morang and perhaps even beyond. I have raised with the state minister for transport that in Melbourne we should be looking at innovative ways of integrating our bus network with our rail network by using the rail easements, as has been done in both Adelaide and Brisbane. These are things which a federal government can show leadership on.
Telecom infrastructure has been mentioned. Even in a constituency like mine, where we have new estates being built, because of the appalling telecom infrastructure there is uncertain access to broadband services. In terms of utilities infrastructure, we see the need for mains water pipes, waste water services and gas and electricity services. This illustrates the need for not only the renewal and maintenance of that type of infrastructure but also the provision of that infrastructure in new areas. These are all issues that relate, in my case, to urban needs. They should be looked at not just in the context of what the local community needs but also because of their economic, social and environmental impacts, in the context of national and regional problems.

I stress, therefore, that there is a need for the national government to take on board these issues of infrastructure and realise that there is a need for a population and settlement policy that can be integrated with the way in which we achieve the provision of infrastructure. We can look not only at physical infrastructure but also at social infrastructure—health, education and the like. Only by looking at these in a holistic way and with all levels of government joining together with communities can we move towards sustainable communities. I hope that these issues will be investigated in the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Environment and Heritage inquiry into sustainable cities 2025. I think that this building a nation program could be a step towards having a proper federal involvement in the provision of infrastructure. (Time expired)

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. D.G.H. Adams)—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.

PRIVATE MEMBERS’ BUSINESS
Tetanus

Ms HOARE (Charlton) (3.49 p.m.)—I move:

That this House:

(1) recognises the development and distribution of the tetanus vaccine in developed countries such as Australia has led to the virtual elimination of the disease;

(2) notes tetanus continues to be a major cause of fatalities in many developing countries, with some 100 million people still at risk of contracting the disease;

(3) calls for measures to be implemented that will lead to the elimination of tetanus in developing countries; and

(4) recognises the efforts of UNICEF and its programs in attempting to reduce tetanus in communities around the world.

To start with, I would like to thank my colleague the member for Pearce, Judi Moylan, for agreeing to second this motion so that it could be put forward and discussed in this parliament in a bipartisan way. Tetanus is a disease caused by a bacterium called Clostridium tetani. The bacteria secrete a neurotoxin that affects the central nervous system and causes muscular contractions so fast that they cannot be distinguished from each other and become one continuous spasm. The old-fashioned name for tetanus was lockjaw, from the contraction of and stiffness in the jaw muscles that were characteristic of the disease. Tetanus can be fatal but is preventable by vaccination.

In June this year, along with others from the parliamentary UNICEF group, I met with Dr Francois Gasse, UNICEF head of tetanus immunisation. For people in the industrialised world, tetanus is largely a thing of the past due to routine immunisation. But in impoverished countries the disease remains endemic. Indeed, tetanus is the leading cause of neonatal mortality in the poorest parts of
the world. Today, 70 years since the vaccine became available, some 100 million people are still at risk of one of the most painful deaths known to medicine.

Tetanus spores exist naturally in the soil everywhere, and the bacteria can penetrate through the smallest cut or even a simple scratch. If a person has not been vaccinated, tetanus will spread through the body, releasing a potent poison that disrupts the motor nerves and causes severe muscle spasms. There is no cure—only sedation in an effort to minimise the seizures. Because tetanus causes stiffness of the jaw and facial muscles, victims cannot eat and must be tube-fed. Fewer than 20 per cent survive. Newborns in developing countries are commonly infected when their umbilical cords are cut in unsanitary conditions. Yet if a mother is vaccinated, she passes her immunity to her baby, who is protected for the first few months of life.

Dr Francois Gasse, head of UNICEF’s tetanus immunisation programs, graduated from medical school in France in 1973 and then earned a master’s degree in public health from Johns Hopkins University in Maryland. Gasse made tetanus his career focus in the early 1980s, when it was a major killer in 115 countries. He worked for the World Health Organisation before joining UNICEF in February 2000 to focus on eliminating maternal and neonatal tetanus (MNT) around the world. In his quest to stop tetanus, Gasse has travelled to the farthest corners of 92 countries. Thanks largely to the efforts of Gasse, today tetanus affects the people of only 53 countries. By the year 2010, he hopes to see it eliminated altogether.

UNICEF is committed to the United Nations Millennium Development Goals, including the improvement of maternal health. As part of UNICEF’s priority strategy called ‘Immunisation Plus’, there is a determination to eliminate maternal and neonatal tetanus by the end of 2005. It is an ambitious goal but, given the will and the resources, it is possible.

In 2003 UNICEF Australia began its fundraising campaign in support of MNT by pledging to contribute $A5 million to the global effort. While still encouraging and welcoming financial support from individuals and companies, UNICEF Australia in 2004 will also seek funds from the Australian government, through AusAID, to provide project support for routine immunisation, including MNT, to a number of countries in our region including Cambodia, Indonesia, Burma, Papua New Guinea and Timor Leste.

The UN Millennium Development Goals call on all of us to play our part to ensure a more equitable and safe world. UNICEF Australia is doing just that by promoting an opportunity for all Australians to become part of UNICEF’s work for children and women by joining the Global Parent program. Members may have already seen the current television commercials that are running nationally, as well as the billboards in several states that urge fellow Australians to play their part in helping UNICEF make a world fit for children. In developed countries such as Australia routine tetanus immunisation has almost eliminated tetanus from the community. However, 70 years since the vaccine became available, some 100 million people are still at risk of one of the most painful deaths known.

Dr Gasse is largely responsible for reducing the impact of tetanus so that it now affects only 53 countries—and he continues to work towards its elimination by 2010. I have brought forward this motion to urge the government to consider providing the assistance that would help Dr Gasse and UNICEF in
their work to eliminate tetanus in all developing countries around the world.

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

Mrs MOYLAN (Pearce) (3.54 p.m.)—I second the motion. I am very pleased to support this motion put forward by my colleague the member for Charlton, who has shown a continuing effort with these issues. The member for Charlton has well described the horrors of tetanus. The medical fraternity recognises that dying from tetanus is one of the most painful deaths mankind can experience. The bacteria can very simply enter the body through any cut or scratch. It is found naturally in soil everywhere, and it has a most dreadful effect on babies in particular, whose chances of surviving tetanus are virtually zero.

Fortunately, as the member for Charlton has said, a vaccine was discovered 70 years ago and Australian children are successfully protected from this terrible sickness. For children immunised in the first year of life tetanus is a thing of the past. Certainly this is the case in the industrialised world. In impoverished countries the disease remains endemic. Newborn babies are especially at risk when the umbilical cord is cut in unsanitary conditions. Tetanus is the leading source of neonatal mortality in the poorest parts of the world, according to Dr Francois Gasse, who leads a project to eliminate tetanus by 2010.

As my colleague the member for Charlton has already said, we had the opportunity to meet Dr Gasse. He was introduced to us by Samithra Bala, the UNICEF project coordinator. Gasse is a French physician currently heading UNICEF’s tetanus immunisation program. He has devoted his whole career to this disease. Confronting some of the most fearful conditions and putting his own life at risk, Dr Gasse’s commitment to eliminating tetanus is indeed an inspiration to all those who have had the privilege of meeting him.

The partnership between Gasse, UNICEF and WHO to eliminate tetanus is working. Tetanus has been a major killer in 115 countries, and the work of the partnership has reduced that risk. Today the target is to eliminate tetanus in 53 countries and to eliminate it altogether by 2010. The project is impressive and it deserves our support. I hope that the government and the Australian public will take this matter to heart, recognising the terrible trauma that it causes to families living in undeveloped countries. This program has the potential to save around 200,000 babies who currently die every year from tetanus, and the tri-part plan to immunise 240 million mothers in developing countries is a very important one. Other aspects of the plan are the improvement of birthing practices through education and the monitoring of high-risk communities.

But the immunisation of mothers is one of the most important aspects of this program, because the antibodies cross the placenta and provide protection for babies before they are born. UNICEF believes that it is possible through this plan to conquer maternal and neonatal tetanus within three years. The importance of this program succeeding was well summarised by leading medical broadcaster Dr Norman Swan, who said:

Tetanus is a horror disease that has long disappeared from Western consciousness. But it mustn’t disappear from Western consciences because every day thousands of babies and indeed mothers die of this entirely preventable disease—all for the sake of a $2 immunisation.

Tetanus is an important issue for those living in countries where the disease still prevails. As I said, I hope the Australian public and the government will make a contribution toward completely eliminating this entirely preventable disease.
I rise to support the motion moved by the member for Charlton and seconded by the member for Pearce. Maternal and neonatal tetanus is something that has disappeared from the consciousness of many Australians because it is not something that affects Australians generally these days. Tetanus vaccination is extremely common in Australia, and very few people would have ever known anyone or heard of anyone who had contracted tetanus. But in developing countries, where tetanus vaccinations are not common, it is something that kills many women and children every year.

Tetanus bacteria is generally present in soil and in human and animal faeces. UNICEF estimates that 100 million mothers and newborn babies are in danger of contracting tetanus. The tetanus spores get into open cuts during childbirth, either through the umbilical cord or the body of the mother. If the mother has been immunised in advance, she passes on her immunity to her newborn. But, if she has not been immunised, the tetanus spores act like a poison and cause spasms, stiffness and arching of the spine. Ultimately, breathing becomes very difficult and the spasms occur more frequently. The member for Charlton said that very few people survive tetanus, and indeed UNICEF’s own estimates are that between 70 per cent and 100 per cent of cases end in a very painful, torturous and unnecessary death. Remembering that vaccination costs only a little over $2 per person, it seems immoral not to offer this vaccination as widely as possible. It is one of the cheapest vaccines that we have and, when you know of the number of infections and the pain experienced by people who contract tetanus, it does seem immoral not to offer it as widely as possible.

In 2003, UNICEF Australia began its fundraising campaign in support of maternal and neonatal tetanus vaccination by pledging $5 million of its own money to the global effort. It is fantastic that UNICEF should be able to collect this money from individuals and companies, but it is also important that the Australian government should contribute to this effort. I know that the member for Charlton has had a longstanding interest in this. She is too modest to tell you herself, but she wrote as early as July to the Minister for Foreign Affairs and asked him whether the Australian government could make a contribution to this program to provide tetanus vaccinations to mothers. Unfortunately, while the minister’s reply, which came in August, was a very pleasant and polite letter, it was a letter saying no, the government was not prepared to contribute extra money to this very important effort. I hope that the member for Pearce, having said that she believes it is important for the government to also contribute, will be able to approach the Minister for Foreign Affairs again and perhaps suggest that he might reconsider that decision.

To date, more than 33 million women in high-risk countries have received the tetanus toxoid vaccine, and the delivery of this vaccination has been an incredibly impressive effort by UNICEF. The vaccine has been delivered by car, by bus, on foot, on horseback and even by motorcycle. This has set up an excellent infrastructure for the delivery of other vaccines. There are numerous examples that people can look at on the UNICEF web site if they want to see the program in action. I certainly hope, with the member for Charlton and the member for Pearce, that this is something that not only the Australian public but also the Australian government will be able to commit to.

I would like to thank the member for Charlton for making the House aware of the important issue of tetanus. The neurotoxic clostridia
tetanus—*C. tetani*—is an acute disease in which the clinical effects of a potent neurotoxin, tetanospasmin, manifest themselves with generalised rigidity and intermittent intense muscle spasms. *C. tetani* is an anaerobic gram positive bacillus commonly found in the soil, the intestines of domestic animals and, occasionally, human faeces. Spores are introduced into the tissues after a penetrative injury. After the spores germinate, tetanus toxin is produced by replicating bacteria and is released by cell lysis. Tetanus and botulin toxins are of similar potency and are the most powerful bacterial toxins known. Only one antigenic type of tetanus toxin exists, making possible an effective toxoid for immunisation.

Tetanus is now rare in industrialised countries, because of the widespread use of active immunisation. The few cases that occur in these countries occur in inadequately immunised persons and persons older than 60 years of age, which emphasises the need to maintain immunity in older adults. All Australians should be revaccinated at the age of 50. Rural populations, immigrants and IV drug abusers are also at higher risk. In developing countries, tetanus is still a major problem, causing the deaths of an estimated one million persons annually—the World Health Organisation thinks the figure may possibly be lower, but these are the figures I was given—of which about half are newborns, mainly due to umbilical stump infections.

Tetanus toxin acts principally on the spinal cord, altering normal control of the reflex arc by suppressing the inhibition regularly mediated by the internuncial neurons. This suppression results in muscle spasm, with opposing muscles of greater strength dominating, resulting in the powerful masseter muscle of the jaw to spasm causing trismus, or lockjaw, and in extension of the lower extremities and flexion of the upper extremities. The incubation period between injury and the onset of symptoms ranges from one to 55 days. The shorter the incubation period, the higher the mortality rate—that is, in patients of less than 50 years of age the mortality rate is almost 100 per cent when this period is only one to two days.

Immunisation with diphtheria, pertussis and tetanus vaccine—or DPT—at two months of age, with two additional doses at four and six months of age, a booster at 18 months of age and again four years later is recommended, with a booster of adult type tetanus and diphtheria toxoids at 16 years of age. Thereafter immunity is maintained by booster injections every decade. In developing countries, immunisation of pregnant woman can prevent neonatal tetanus without teratogenicity.

I would like to acknowledge UNICEF and the World Health Organisation for their programs and efforts in attempting to reduce tetanus around the world. I support fully any measures that will lead to the introduction of universal childhood vaccines to prevent this disease in developing countries. Their target of achieving maternal and neonatal tetanus elimination by 2005 and the sustaining of elimination through strengthened routine immunisation and monitoring is to be commended.

**Mr QUICK (Franklin)** *(4.08 p.m.)*—Like other speakers today, I would like to commend the member for Charlton for raising the issue of tetanus in the House today. I would also like to publicly acknowledge a deep and long held involvement in issues relating to developing countries. I also note the involvement of all the other speakers here today—we see the same speakers speaking on these issues. I am pleased to be able to speak on this issue and acknowledge the excellent work being done by UNICEF in developing countries. What a time we live in when it is far easier for rich nations to find
the money to destroy other countries’ vital infrastructure in the search for terrorists than it is to find the money to fund vitally important issues such as the one we are talking about today. It is interesting to note that Australia can find an extra $5 million to give to the Philippines to strengthen their counterterrorism strategies. How much more important it is for this government to increase funding for UNICEF’s tetanus program. What a great goal it is to eliminate maternal and neonatal tetanus by the end of 2005—just 768 days away.

Thankfully, in a country such as Australia, tetanus is a rare disease with only 10 people per year being diagnosed and only one of those dying. However, as other speakers have said, in the developing countries in Asia, Africa and South America the situation is horrendous. Neonatal tetanus on those continents is killing about 800,000 babies each year. Goodness knows how many others suffer from the side effects of this horrible disease. The only effective way to reduce and finally eliminate this toll is to introduce an effective and widespread immunisation campaign—something UNICEF is busy implementing. Globally 100 million people are still at risk of contracting the disease of tetanus. The MNT immunisation commitment is strongly supported by UNICEF Australia. As the honourable member for Sydney said, this year it showed its support by beginning its fund raising campaign by pledging to contribute $A5 million to the global effort—a great effort and a great commitment.

As I said earlier, the target date for eliminating maternal and neonatal tetanus is just 768 days away. Currently the global campaign is going well. Through UNICEF’s involvement, health workers are being trained to immunise thousands of women in those countries at risk. Vaccines are being delivered to rural and remote regions—possibly the areas of greatest risk—and public awareness campaigns are being put in place to highlight the dangers of MNT and the crucial importance of immunisation. Success is sweet. So far more than 33 million women in high-risk countries have received the tetanus toxoid vaccine. As well as those 33 million women, the drive to eliminate tetanus has other great side benefits. By assisting with the provision of comprehensive health care services and infrastructure in the fight to eliminate tetanus, other diseases will also be targeted as a consequence. What a great idea.

Like so many issues raised by the member for Charlton and others speaking on this today—people who have a commitment to the Third World and the underprivileged and dispossessed—I would commend this motion and urge all honourable members to keep abreast of UNICEF’s great work on this commitment. Wouldn’t it be wonderful two years from now to be standing in this House at about this time, congratulating the world community on having finally eliminated maternal and neonatal tetanus from the globe, thereby emulating the feat of those who triumphed over smallpox? As I said, it is 768 days away. The task deserves our total support and commitment—the commitment of all the developed nations—and it can be achieved. I urge all members of this House to focus on this issue and to take a real interest in it.

Ms GAMBARO (Petrie) (4.13 p.m.)—I too would like to thank the member for Charlton for her motion and her interest in this particular area, and I would also like to thank the many members who spoke before me for their contributions. Tetanus remains one of the most terrifying of all diseases, and anyone who has seen a victim die of tetanus will tell you that it is a gruesome death. The face contorts in the dreadful rictus sardonicus, which gave it its former name, lockjaw. The body arches in spasms which rack the victim so terribly that they can actually snap
the vertebrae. Most terrifying of all, this disease is not passed from carrier to carrier but from the earth itself, where the toxic spores lie in wait.

In Australia we are very blasé about this disease. From childhood we grow up in an environment which, largely due to our climate and society, means we lead an outdoor life in close contact with nature. For our barefoot children a splinter in the foot or a cut to the finger are minor nuisances which are dealt with with a bandaid and a passing reflection: ‘It’s okay; no need to see a doctor.’ He or she has had their tetanus shot in primary school, so it is still effective. The worrying type of parent may actually go to their home filing cabinet and look up those old school immunisation certificates to establish whether their child has had all their school shots or whether they should take the child to a doctor for a back-up injection. What a wonderful system we have that gives us all those options. From childhood to adulthood, we Australians have an invisible safety net available.

How often do we stop to consider that the same safety net, the same preventative security system of immunisation, is not available to a huge proportion of the population around the world? In the developing world, tetanus remains a terrible killer, not through random minor accidents like splinters in the finger but through the most universal of experiences—childbirth. In 57 developing countries, maternal and neonatal tetanus continues to be a major public health problem. Eight of those countries—India, Nigeria, Pakistan, Ethiopia, Bangladesh, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia and China—account for 73 per cent of deaths caused by maternal and neonatal tetanus.

And how does tetanus—a disease which we in Australia are lucky to rarely, if ever, see—become a killer of mothers and their newborn babies? It is a reflection of the amazing good fortune and the quality of life that Australians not only enjoy but also take for granted. We find it so difficult to associate a disease caused by contamination from the soil—effectively it is by a microbe that lives in the dirt—with the pristine, hygienic, germ-free environment of childbirth that we know and expect. Again, it is a reflection of the lucky country we live in that this possibility is so remote from our lifestyle and our land.

In developing countries, women do not have their babies in an environment anywhere remotely like what we have or take for granted in Australia. If we were to see the conditions which those unfortunate women face, we would understand why childbirth is so often a ghastly lottery for women in developing countries which ends not in new life but in death—not only of the baby but also, painfully and lingeringly, of the mother.

Neonatal—newborn—tetanus is the most common form of tetanus in developing countries. It accounts for 14 per cent of all neonatal deaths—that is, deaths of newborn infants. We hear these sinister statistics so often. Infant mortality rates in the developing world read like telephone book numbers and we cannot comprehend what they mean. They may seem meaningless to some of us. ‘So many,’ we think as we shrug and then think again, ‘By God and by the fact that we live in this country, we are very lucky indeed.’

But it is not luck at all. It is about living conditions that become dying conditions for too many young women and their babies who die terrible deaths that could have been prevented by immunisation programs. Two million children die each year from diseases like tetanus, for which vaccines are already available at low cost. Why aren’t those vaccines available to save their lives? Geogra-
phy, lack of transport, war and the inertia of
governments create a climate ready to foster
such dreadful diseases. Lack of clean water,
health clinics and trained medical personnel
increase the morbidity rate.

I am very pleased to be able to have the
opportunity to speak to this motion and I
thank the member for Charlton for raising it.
We should continue to work with organisa-
tions such as UNICEF—which has set 2005
as its deadline in the elimination of tetanus—
the World Health Organisation, the UN
Population Fund, the Gates Foundation and
other government and private foundations. I
commend the motion to the House.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Jen-
kins)—Order! The time allotted for this de-
bate has expired. The debate is adjourned
and the resumption of the debate will be
made an order of the day for the next sitting.

GRIEVANCE DEBATE

Question proposed:

That grievances be noted.

Superannuation: Contributions

Mr ANDREN (Calare) (4.19 p.m.)—As
somewhat of a student of inequities in the
superannuation process in this country, I
have been contacted recently by a number of
retired Commonwealth public service em-
ployees—both within my electorate and out-
side of it—greatly concerned by certain in-
herent inequities in the treatment of their
public sector pensions. In their approach to
superannuation as a whole, the Prime Minis-
ter and his government have frequently
stated that the changes made would be made
for the benefit of everyone and everyone
would be treated equitably and fairly. The
expression of ‘a fair go for all Australians’
has been part of this rhetoric. What the PM
has failed to say is that the fair go for all
Australians excluded the government’s own
former employees and members of the de-

Since 1997 the Reserve Bank has indexed
its employees’ super scheme to the MATWE,
the Commonwealth Bank staff scheme is
indexed to average weekly ordinary time
earnings—the AWOTE—while our own par-
liamentary super scheme is indexed to a mix
of indices that also determine increases in
serving parliamentarian salaries, which are on the high side of any index used. The effect of this is that, as politicians’ salaries increase, so too do parliamentary pensions.

In 2001 the indexing of public sector pensions was considered by the Senate Select Committee on Superannuation and Financial Services, which recommended that the government examine adopting a method of indexation that more realistically reflected actual increases in the cost of living. Its report *A reasonable and secure retirement?* was tabled on 5 April 2001. The government rejected the committee’s recommendation on the grounds of increased costs. Every time the public sector schemes—including our parliamentary scheme—are indexed upwards, increases in budget outlays and unfunded liabilities will happen. Governments have faced this fact ever since the introduction of the schemes as far back as 1922. The Commonwealth Actuary’s long-term assessment, outlined in the Intergenerational Report last year, showed that the level of unfunded liabilities of the Commonwealth’s civilian and military schemes, as a percentage of GDP, is in fact declining.

Another fact that is also conveniently ignored on both sides is that the vast majority of public sector employees were employed on salaries well below market rates but which were purportedly balanced by their compulsory superannuation as part of their overall remuneration package. I notice this argument is used in relation to the parliamentary scheme, but no-one can argue that the sorts of reasons that the Chifley government used to introduce the parliamentary scheme—the severance of careers and so on—can realistically apply to retired politicians. But they can, I would suggest, apply to public servants who served long and diligently in the expectation of a reasonably comfortable retirement.

These former employees—civilian and armed forces—were not treated generously when working, and it is a flawed argument that says that their superannuation benefits are generous compared to other schemes in the community. Their superannuated pensions are anything but generous when compared to the increases in recent years. The pension received by a married couple, eligible for a full age pension, the pharmaceutical allowance, plus the maximum additional income allowed before their pension is reduced, amounts to $25,318.80. The average Commonwealth public sector superannuation pensions, on the other hand, are $14,830 under the Military Superannuation and Benefits Scheme; $18,617 under the Defence Force Retirement and Death Benefits Scheme; $19,982 under the Commonwealth Superannuation Scheme; and $14,047 under the Public Sector Superannuation Scheme. These figures are at 30 June this year. Almost 60 per cent of Commonwealth superannuants receive less than $20,000 a year.

The government response to the first of the Senate committee’s recommendations was to pass responsibility to the state and territory governments. It said, ‘The government understands that the use of the CPI to update pensions is consistent with arrangements that state and territory governments have for indexing superannuation pensions.’ This contradicts the heads of government agreement the Commonwealth signed with the states and territories in 1994 in which the signatories agreed to conform with the principles of the Commonwealth’s retirement income policies. It is the Commonwealth government that sets the standard for the states and territories to follow. There is no equity in keeping the Commonwealth superannuation schemes indexed to the CPI alone. It certainly fails to deliver the much promised fair go for all Australians.
The government gave some ground in response to one recommendation from the Senate committee: it agreed to index Commonwealth pensions twice yearly to the CPI. But this still skirts the core issue for retired public sector employees—that is, the purchasing power of their pensions continues to diminish and so too their standard of living. At 3.99, the Senate committee reported that the CPI is an inadequate reflection of the ‘actual rise in the cost of living for retirees relative to community living standards’. At 3.101, the committee went a step further, recommending that, if the government said the cost of changing the indexation method would be too great, rather than simply retain indexation to the consumer price index, the government should investigate introducing an incremental two-tier system. According to the committee, this would ensure that the needs of Commonwealth superannuants are met while containing the cost to the government.

In comparison to the pension for qualifying ex-members of parliament—which, as I have said, increase as serving parliamentarians’ salaries increase—increases based on the CPI only would hardly seem equitable. Over the last 10 years, parliamentary superannuation benefits have increased by 44 per cent, Centrelink pensions have increased by 38 per cent and Commonwealth public sector pensions have increased by 23 per cent—including for retired military personnel. This is a considerable lag for former Commonwealth employees—all of whom were public servants in the true sense, who planned their lives for retirement and who could not jump between the public and private sectors in search of greener pastures and put themselves out in the marketplace as so many can, and do, today.

There is a genuine need for a reality check in superannuation in this country—and that applies to those retired public servants is certainly an area that needs intense attention. Superannuation in this country is a source of deep division between and within various sections of our society. I have pointed that out to some people ad nauseam over the years, but there are inequities that are not being addressed. The treatment of these former public servants who gave so loyally over so many years is a disgrace that needs to be attended to urgently—as, indeed, does the parliamentary scheme about which I introduced a bill in this House which nobody seems inclined to debate.

Rural and Regional Australia: Water Use, Nuclear Waste, and Public Risk Insurance

Mr WAKELIN (Grey) (4.28 p.m.)—In the grievance debate this afternoon I will cover a few issues particularly pertaining to regional policy and regional Australia. It is pleasing to have seen a much more national focus on water policy come about in recent years, and the leadership of the Deputy Prime Minister and the Minister for the Environment and Heritage, among others in our executive, is very welcome. I was raised in an area where water was as precious as just about any other commodity, and I have for a very long time been greatly concerned at witnessing around this country in places where there was an abundance of water not the greatest of respect for this resource. But that is all changing.

I make the observation that one kilolitre of water is charged at a rate of about $1—that is, 1,000 litres equals $1. One litre of petrol equals $1. One schooner of beer is somewhere under $3. Some would say the comparisons are not exactly accurate or even as tightly relevant as science would demand. But I think it is worth making the point that, if water is worth one-tenth of a cent per litre and petrol is worth $1 a litre and a litre bottle of water bought at the shop is worth around $1.50 or $2, then surely a kilolitre of water in
bulk needs to be treated with far greater respect than it has been in the past.

I make that point because we procrastinate about what we should do with the Murray-Darling Basin. We have had a constant argument around it, although it seems to be getting a stronger focus than it has for a very long time. We have had a very long debate between the states and the Commonwealth about the future of our major rivers and our basins, to the point where we now have the national action plan. Nevertheless, for all of that, we still have no-one really talking about what water is really worth right across the country. We are having a wide ranging debate but no-one is actually in nuts and bolts terms taking what I would call a really hard-nosed approach to when people turn on a tap for any purpose—in the house, in industry or in irrigation.

In my own area—the Eyre Peninsula in South Australia, which is where I come from—it has been somewhat ironical to observe that over many decades now we have seen the reduction in the capacity of the surface reservoirs and greater pressure put onto underground basins. We still do not really know in that part of the world what the true costs are. There is no transparency. That is a real challenge for the states and the state water authorities because, until we get accurate information, we cannot really expect people—consumers, broad scale users and those people who can have a real influence on how this resource is used better—to use water better. We need to have transparency and accuracy in the measurement of the resource. I look forward to that and I hope that the states and the state water authorities can very much assist with that.

I now move to another topic, the topic of nuclear waste. I say to the House that as the member for the electorate which has been chosen—after exhaustive analysis, exhaustive committee work and enough environmental impact statements to come out your ears—I accept it is time that the low-level nuclear waste that was put at Woomera by the Keating government about a decade ago be put to rest on a permanent basis. It is a great pity—a matter of frustration and disappointment—that there will always be those who choose to play politics with it. It is as if people almost like it to be there and to exist so they can make a political ploy out of it and play politics with it. I welcome the government’s decision in bringing this debate forward and taking the only responsible decision that it could.

I remind people that the level of radioactivity that is in this waste is no greater and probably less than that in a load of superphosphate—that is, fertiliser—for a wheat crop. For those people who think that by playing politics with it there are cheap votes, I simply ask them to have a look. South Australia is the only place where this sort of debate is carried on in this manner. I look to the Premier, Mr Rann, to endeavour to show some maturity and to accept that this waste has been sitting in the outback of South Australia for at least a decade and that the time has come to conclude this debate responsibly. The time has come to deal with it safely, rather than have it sitting on North Terrace—and many other places around this state of South Australia and Australia generally—as is the case at the moment.

In conclusion I will talk about the difficulty of public risk insurance. I could name at least a dozen country race meetings in my electorate which are either under great pressure or have been discontinued. There is a constant threat hanging over their heads with regard to whether they can afford to risk running what have been traditions for many decades and in some places for more than 100 years. What is the basis of this threat of litigation and the cost of public risk insur-
This page contains speeches from the House of Representatives. The speeches discuss various topics, including rodeos, legal industry, and health care, specifically magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) machines. The context suggests a debate or discussion on the availability and accessibility of MRI services in regional communities, particularly in Sydney's inner west.
question was published in Hansard on 19 August 2002 and confirmed inter alia:
MRI services provided to public outpatients and privately referred patients … are funded by the Commonwealth Government.

The minister also confirmed at that time that an independent advisory body, the MRI Monitoring and Evaluation Group, MEG, monitors access to Medicare funded MRI machines and identifies the need for additional units. Critically, the minister’s answer to part 5 of my question—the part specific to Concord hospital—was:

Advice received from the MEG indicates that there are sufficient MRI services available in metropolitan Sydney. It is not possible to indicate when Concord Hospital would be entitled to a MRI licence.

As I have previously stated in this House, I reject this humbug and cant. This is not acceptable to my constituents, nor is it acceptable to Concord hospital. Concord hospital is critical to my electorate of Lowe and to the tens of thousands of residents of the inner west. The hospital also has a proud and distinguished history of serving the veteran community. Most significantly, it is a teaching hospital of the University of Sydney.

On 29 August last year, I again followed up this issue with the Minister representing the Minister for Health and Ageing in this chamber. I asked him, amongst other things, to confirm which of the 26 Medicare eligible MRI sites in New South Wales are teaching hospitals and to confirm the distribution of teaching hospitals in New South Wales that have MRI licences or offer Medicare eligible MRI services. Finally, I asked:

Will the Minister offer Concord Repatriation General Hospital an MRI licence and allow it to provide Medicare eligible MRI services; if so, when; if not, why not.

The minister’s reply confirmed that nine of the 13 teaching hospitals, or close to 70 per cent, can provide Medicare eligible MRI services. Unfortunately, Concord hospital, which as I have said is a major teaching hospital of Sydney University, is not one of those nine teaching hospitals in the opinion of the minister. The minister then predictably repeated the blatantly political response that denies Concord hospital a licence to provide Medicare eligible MRI services. The minister accepted the advice of the MEG that there were sufficient MRI services available in metropolitan Sydney and said it was not possible to indicate when Concord hospital would be entitled to an MRI licence. That is a monumental smoke and mirrors response. It does not indicate when the great institution of Concord hospital will get one of these very important licences.

This afternoon I again wish to emphatically state—as I have been campaigning on this issue for over 18 months on behalf of my constituents and Dr Ridley, who heads up the radiology department of Concord hospital—that the Howard government’s position is clear: there are enough MRI services in Sydney. I have news for the government. The government is saying that patients in my electorate of Lowe should have to travel to Royal Prince Alfred Hospital or to North Shore or, indeed, to Westmead for any condition that requires an MRI scan. The Howard government is also saying to my constituents and the residents of the inner west that it does not matter, that this is acceptable and that Concord hospital is one of only a small minority of New South Wales teaching hospitals that does not have a licence to operate Medicare eligible MRI services. I say again: this is a load of rubbish. I asked the new Minister for Health and Ageing, Mr Abbott, the following question on notice, dated 18 September 2003:

Further to the answers to question Nos 2079, 2080 and 2081 (Hansard, 8 September 2003, pages 18988 and 18989) is it the case that the Government does not want to grant a Magnetic
Resonance Imaging (MRI) Machine licence to operate a Medicare eligible MRI unit at Concord Repatriation General Hospital; if so, why; if not, why is it that the Minister cannot give some indication when a licence could be approved.

The minister replied:

The Government is currently working with the radiology profession, as part of the Radiology Memorandum of Understanding, to develop options for a controlled expansion in access to Medicare funded Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI). It is not possible to indicate when, or if, MRI services at Concord Repatriation General Hospital will be eligible for Medicare rebates.

As I understand it, the almost secret MEG process is to be replaced with this memorandum of understanding, which includes radiology expertise. My concern—and the concern of the constituents that I represent in the federal seat of Lowe—is that this will consider the interest of radiologists before the interests of patients in my electorate. We well remember Dr Wooldridge and the infamous MRI scan scam, which certainly did look after the interests of radiologists and not patients. I have asked question on notice No. 2767 to find out who was granted the last MRI licence.

There is little doubt that an overwhelming number of constituents in my electorate share these fears and are outraged that the Howard government does not take Concord hospital or the residents of Sydney’s inner west very seriously. The minister has only to look at one of the excellent local newspapers in my electorate of Lowe to understand and appreciate what my constituents feel about this issue. I commend the Inner Western Courier newspaper for its interest in this matter and for its reports by Alison Riedy, a very erudite journalist, on 10 November 2003 entitled ‘It’s personal, Mr Abbott’ and ‘We look like idiots’. I commend those reports to the minister, because they explain quite clearly the concern of my constituents.

There is another report, entitled ‘Concord’s still waiting’. As late as today, I have had faxed to me two articles, again from the Inner Western Courier, written by Nicole Azopardi as well as a number of published letters by constituents in relation to the urgent need for this MRI service in my electorate. I call on the minister to grant the licence now. (Time expired)

Waltzing Matilda

Mr McARTHUR (Corangamite) (4.48 p.m.)—Following the epic Rugby World Cup final in Sydney on Saturday, with England winning in the last 30 seconds of extra time, it is appropriate that we in this House acknowledge the origins and creation of Waltzing Matilda. In 2003, it is also 100 years since the ballad was written by Banjo Paterson and circulated, publicly advertising Billy Tea for enterprising tea merchant James Inglis. Waltzing Matilda has been part of Australia’s folklore since its popular acclaim following the Boer War, its part rendition on the landings at Gallipoli and its growing popularity since the First World War. I am indebted to Richard Magoffin, whose well-researched book Waltzing Matilda: The Story Behind the Legend sets out in graphic detail the truth behind a number of the legends and myths surrounding the development of both the words and the lyrics of this song.

The shearers' strikes of the 1890s were a forerunner and symbol of the great debates in this parliament, particularly having regard to the emergence of the Labor Party, whose foundation was at the Tree of Knowledge at Barcaldine in 1891, along with the spirit and fervour generated by the strong feelings of the shearers in the bush at that time and their struggles against the squatter-pastoralists of New South Wales and Queensland. My grandmother’s sister, Christina McPherson, played a pivotal role in the development of Waltzing Matilda and the now famous tune.
The background to ‘Mathilde’ is steeped in European history, going back to the 30-year war, from 1618 to 1643, when ‘Mathilde’ was the name given by German soldiers to their female camp followers. Over the centuries and in the early part of Australian history, ‘Matilda’ represented not only camp followers but the swag of itinerant shearers. As the author Magoffin so rightly says:

Matilda says it all from the shoulders of the swagman/shearers and it was from the ethos of those troubled times that she rose from her sordid past to become a woman of world renown.

Banjo Paterson was born on 17 February 1864 near Orange, New South Wales. At 16 he matriculated, and he later became a managing clerk for a firm of solicitors in Sydney. He wrote a number of ballads, with Clancy of the Overflow appearing in 1889 in the Bulletin under a pen-name. In October 1895 he wrote The Man from Snowy River and Other Verses, which was released under his own name of Banjo Paterson. Those ballads made him a local celebrity overnight. Obviously, The Man from Snowy River is part of our folklore and legend, as is Waltzing Matilda.

It would appear that Robert Tannahill’s ballad Thou Bonnie Wood O’Craigielea is still sung in Scottish schools, having been published in about 1805. This ballad was the tune that my grandfather’s sister Christina McPherson heard at the Warrnambool races in April 1894. In another context, Christina McPherson as a young baby played a critical role, through her crying in the nursery, in allowing the nurse to alert the constabulary that the bushranger Mad Dog Morgan was holding the family captive at Pechelba Station. Through that alerting of the police, Mad Dog Morgan was shot dead that morning.

The McPherson family came from Scotland in 1854 and took up land in northern Victoria. They spent some time in Melbourne, and in 1891 Margaret McPherson married my grandfather, Sir Stewart McArthur of Meningoort, Camperdown, who became a judge in the Supreme Court of Victoria. Her sister—that is, my grandmother’s sister—was Christina McPherson of Dagworth Station in north-west Queensland. She came down to Victoria on 24 April 1894, where she heard the new march Thou Bonnie Wood O’Craigielea played for the first time at the Warrnambool races. Family legend has it that Christina returned to Meningoort, the property of the McArthur family, and replayed the Craigielea tune on the piano at the homestead. This is confirmed by Magoffin and documented in letters from my aunt Mrs Isla McIntosh, which record those events within the family annals. She observed that Christina was a very noted pianist who would have had a very good ear for music.

The shearsers’ strikes were the dominant feature of political, social and pastoral life between 1891 and 1894. Dagworth Station was the scene of a determined and successful attack by the unionists on 2 September 1894, when 16 armed unionists attacked the woolshed, having ridden 20 miles at night from Kynuna. They burnt the shed to the ground, along with 100 sheep. This became very much part of the Waltzing Matilda legend. At the time of the burning of Dagworth Station, a French itinerant worker called Hoffmeister committed suicide near the station, which led to the eventual arrest of the unionists because of the similarity of the weapons used.

At about this time, Banjo Paterson stayed at Dagworth Station, which consisted of 100,000 acres and enjoyed very good seasonal conditions. Magoffin’s father was also a friend of Christina’s father, Bob McPherson, so he has first-hand knowledge of these myths and legends. As often happened to these pioneer pastoralists, the drought of 1900 wiped out McPherson, and Dagworth Station went to the banks and mortgagees.
The swagman becomes a focal point of *Waltzing Matilda*. In his book Magoffin writes of the swagman:

He takes just a minimum, a sugar bag for his tucker, a billy can and usually he leads a water bag by a stick poked through a couple of lugs, his swag being fairly thin and light, he carried it over one shoulder by a couple of straps around the middle so that each end hangs loose. Nearly everywhere this is called ‘humping the bluey’ because most bush blankets are blue or ‘humping the drum’, but in these parts—that is, in Queensland—they called it ‘waltzing matildas’.

It would appear that Banjo Paterson and Christina McPherson, who had memorised the Craigielea tune for her piano recital at Meningoort, along with the McPherson family—with Banjo Paterson’s lead—developed the words and the tune around the dining table when Banjo Paterson was a guest at Dagworth Station. Magoffin says in his book that this famous Australian song was developed over an evening’s entertainment, with the words led by Banjo Paterson and the tune by Christina McPherson.

From this time, there has been ongoing controversy about the origins of the song, the script and later the copyright, which is another saga in itself. As Magoffin writes, in January 1895 at Dagworth Station nobody had any doubts about the song that was to become world famous. The Dagworth party was soon singing the new song with nothing special about it. It was just a bit of fun for the famous balladist and entertainment for his friends. As Magoffin reports in his book, Marie Cowan arranged the music and the words for publication and allowed James Inglis to use the ballad for advertising his Billy Tea in 1903. That is where some controversy has arisen about Marie Cowan’s contribution. It is important to note that she arranged the music and the words, rather than developed their originality.

After that time the origins of *Waltzing Matilda* became confused and under considerable controversy. The copyright was retained by American publishing interests, and it was only when my cousin Diana Baillieu found the original manuscript of *Waltzing Matilda*, written by Christina McPherson, that it was confirmed that, some 91 years before, the words were written at Dagworth Station. Richard Magoffin’s research supports the McArthur family legend that the origins of *Waltzing Matilda* were at the Warrnambool races in 1894. Through the retentive musical ability of Christina McPherson, the tune was transferred to Dagworth Station in north-west Queensland, which at that time was a hotbed of political and social debate. That is the foundation of the *Waltzing Matilda* story of the 1890s. So the legend of *Waltzing Matilda* was born from the connection of these two families.

**Iraq**

Ms PLIBERSEK (Sydney) (4.58 p.m.)—In March this year I was asked by Mark Colvin on ABC radio:

... what if the Americans are right, what if in a week or two there are pictures of Iraqis fraternising with the invading forces, what if the Americans go in and find what the weapons inspectors haven’t been able to find; won’t the Labor Party and the peace movement in general end up looking foolish over this?

Unfortunately, those who opposed the war with Iraq have not in fact been proved wrong. Where are we now? I think it is worth asking, many months after George Bush officially declared victory in May, about the death toll, about Iraqi civilian support for the invasion and about the future prospects for Iraq. President Bush declared victory in May in a highly stage managed media event on a naval vessel off the coast of California. It is difficult to understand what his definition of victory might be when hostilities have continued, the death toll is mounting and Iraq
seems a long way from peace and prosperity. Coalition casualties have been substantial. A recent article by Robert Manne cites figures including more than 400 coalition soldiers having died and 9,000 US soldiers having been evacuated as a result of serious injury—2,000 of those because of war wounds and 500 because of psychiatric breakdowns.

Of course, the casualty figures for Iraqi troops are much greater and the death toll for Iraqi civilians is also extremely high. Although it is impossible to be sure of exact numbers, a report by the British Medical Association, Medact, entitled Continuing collateral damage: the health and environmental costs of war on Iraq 2003 estimates that ‘more than 20,000 Iraqis have died’ between the start of hostilities and when the report was concluded in October 2003. In fact, the Medact report estimates a number as high as 55,000 for the deaths that occurred in that time. But even if we take the lower figure of just over 20,000, that is still an unacceptably high number of deaths. Many of them have been direct casualties of the conflict, either shot or bombed, but there are other factors. I quote Dr Sabya Farooq, who is the author of the report:

Limited access to clean water and sanitation, poverty, malnutrition, disruption of public services continue to have a negative impact on the health of the Iraqi people...

The US and their allies have an obligation under the Geneva Convention to maintain law and order and to protect hospitals, health professionals and those who provide humanitarian aid in Iraq. That is extremely difficult, given that 400,000 army personnel have been retrenched at the same time as 100,000 hardened criminals walk the streets, having been released just before the war by Saddam Hussein. Obviously, the number of weapons in the country—and I am not talking about weapons of mass destruction but about handguns—means that lawlessness has been a significant problem. This is seen in the morgue figures. Before the war, the morgue investigated on average 20 firearm deaths per month. In August this year there were 581 firearm deaths.

Despite the rush to make war on Iraq, the United States are now looking for a way out. Having had no exit strategy to start with, they are talking about withdrawing from Iraq by July 2004. They had wanted to wait until there was a constitution adopted and free elections held, but obviously that is too difficult now. Interestingly, the United States, the very country that condemned the United Nations and its structures as ‘irrelevant’, are now looking to the United Nations to fix up the mess that they have made. As for public opinion in Iraq, a recent Gallup poll showed that 94 per cent of Iraqis said that they felt more insecure now than under Saddam Hussein. Eighty-six per cent said they felt fearful about leaving their homes at night. Forty-three per cent believed that the US invaded to ‘rob Iraq’s oil’. Thirty-seven per cent believed that the US invaded to ‘get rid of Saddam Hussein’. Six per cent believed that the US invaded to ‘change the Middle East in the interests of Israel’. Five per cent believed that the US invaded to assist the Iraqi people. Four per cent believed the US invaded to destroy weapons of mass destruction. One per cent believed the US invaded to introduce democracy. Another poll, on the occupation, showed that 70 per cent believed that life would be better in five years—that is the good news—but only 40 per cent believed that democracy could ever work. Two-thirds wanted the US and British troops to leave within the year. One-third thought the US would help Iraq over the next five years, and half thought they would do harm. As US pollster John Zogby puts it:

Only one thing is clear: the predicted euphoria of Iraq has not materialised.
This has occurred in an environment where attacks on coalition forces have continued to increase. In May the average was 12 per day and at present there are 35 to 40 each day. There was in fact another tragic attack yesterday in which two US soldiers had their throats slit while their car was stopped at some lights. It seems that, rather than the invasion doing anything to address the issues of terrorism in the Middle East, it has made Iraq a magnet for soldiers and terrorists from other countries. There are, according to the United States, terrorists coming from neighbouring countries and also paid mercenaries coming from other countries. Robert Manne, in his article about Iraq, said:

For democracy to succeed Iraq has to shrug off its Saddamite legacy; invent a liberal-democratic tradition where none exists; transcend the religious conflicts between Shia and Sunni Muslims; reconcile the different world views of the profoundly religious and profoundly secular segments of society; and satisfy the nationalist appetites of the long starved ethnic Kurds.

That is some task. The fact is that some democracies—particularly federal democracies, as Iraq is likely to become—have taken hundreds of years to evolve and take shape, yet we are expecting that over the next few months Iraq will come up with a model that is acceptable to its population in a context where it is financially under a great deal of stress, its civil infrastructure has been destroyed and there is increased insecurity in the region.

The situation in Iraq is bad now but it was terrible before the war. There is no question that Saddam Hussein’s regime was a brutal, totalitarian one and had been for decades. It is also true that the US government was aware of that when it sold weapons to Iraq. Instead of governments using the justification of human rights, initially they used weapons of mass destruction as the pretext for the invasion. Our Prime Minister said:

Saddam Hussein has weapons of mass destruction; these may fall into the hands of terrorists, who may attack us.

But we now know that the Australian government had information from a report by the British Joint Intelligence Committee that said there was no evidence of imminent danger. When no weapons of mass destruction were found, the reason for the war changed, with the government linking the Iraqi government to terrorist organisations, specifically al-Qaeda. By the time of the US invasion of Iraq in March 2003, a New York Times-CBS News survey estimated that 42 per cent of Americans surveyed thought that Saddam Hussein was directly responsible for the attacks on the United States on 11 September 2001. An ABC newspoll found that 55 per cent of Americans thought Saddam Hussein was directly linked with al-Qaeda. But there is no evidence that the attacks on Iraq have made any difference to terrorism other than to perhaps increase it in the region.

The third reason given was the brutality of the regime. This came in the context of the various governments knowing for some time about the brutality of the regime but not being interested in doing anything about it. It is worth remembering that it also comes in the context that last year the state of Texas executed more people—most of them were poor blacks and Hispanics—than any country in the world. It is hardly justifiable for the US to be lecturing other countries on human rights in the context of their extraordinary use of the death penalty. There must have been strong international pressure against the brutal regime of Saddam Hussein, but surely going to war was not the only possible solution to that. Many of the atrocities that he was accused of occurred many decades ago. The reasons for invading Iraq are still mysterious, but one thing that I would like to say is that this sort of pre-emptive military action must never occur again. (Time expired)
Education: University of Western Sydney

COOL Country FM

Miss JACKIE KELLY (Lindsay—Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister) (5.08 p.m.)—First up, I would like to thank the people who have sent me get well wishes or who have inquired about my health following the rather nasty accident I had on the Saturday after this House last met. It was a big shock. I would certainly like to send my thanks to those people who stopped. It was lovely to see that there is still that concern in the community. Being female and single, I am always reluctant to stop at accidents, especially at night, but it is nice to know that in Sydney and in our part of the world people still do stop to inquire after the health of people in nasty events such as that one. My thanks to everyone for their concern.

I was very surprised to receive a lovely bunch of flowers from the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Western Sydney, who sent them on behalf of the UWS community, which was also concerned about my health. I have been an enormous supporter of UWS throughout my time as the member for Lindsay, but recently we have been at loggerheads about university administration. It seems that parts of my complaints are being addressed with a mission statement—a vision mission strategic plan—that is being developed, and I have had the privilege of seeing a draft copy of it. I understand that it is due to go before the board shortly. I am not sure whether or not that is next month.

It does address a few of the things that I have had concerns about. It includes five strategic goals which are very worthy, but I would like to see them filled in with a lot more detail and accomplished in a much shorter time frame. Certainly in my area the demand is growing and building for tertiary education. Some 23,000 students will be graduating from school in my area; as well, 40 per cent of New South Wales kids go to school in my area. There is an enormous demand for tertiary education into the future, and certainly private universities that have searched the world look at Western Sydney as a place to invest to capture that future demand. My vision for UWS is for it to be one of the great eight, or great nine, universities. I think it is a shame that someone from greater Western Sydney would go past UWS to one of the institutions that are in Kensington and other areas that are very difficult to access from our area.

The first strategic goal in the UWS draft plan is to provide distinctive, professionally orientated and flexible academic programs. They note that the sector satisfaction for graduates is 68 per cent, with UWS at 56 per cent, and they have a target to match the sector average by 2008. I think 2008 is a bit late. There is a lot of competition out there, chewing at the bit. They should be targeting earlier and probably exceeding the sector average. They are looking at all units having online supported web sites by the end of 2005. I think a lot needs to be done in the online environment at UWS. They need to have a really good look at it. What is not in the plan is solid investment and investment advice, how that is to go ahead and where the funding is to come from. They have set themselves a number of other goals with 2005 and 2008 outcomes.

The second strategic goal is to enhance the university’s reputation for educational excellence and scholarship in teaching resulting from the professionalism of staff and their commitment to students. In terms of graduate satisfaction, they are again looking to match the industry sector by 2008. There is no data on the current position, but they are looking to implement a staff development policy of two per cent of the staff budget for professional development. I think that will...
go some way to easing some of the staff unrest I have mentioned before in terms of the exodus of staff from UWS. I have received a lot of complaints through my office. As you track them down, they generally end at an ex-employee’s door who has signed a confidentiality agreement. That would be an interesting exercise in itself: to see how many staff in recent years have left UWS with confidentiality agreements and the reasons behind those confidentiality agreements. If the other place wants an inquiry, a good one would be to look at those confidentiality agreements and the evidence that could come forth in a public hearing under privilege from those people forced to sign those confidentiality agreements.

In looking at the university’s reputation, their strategic goal No. 3 is to ensure higher education participation rates of people from greater Western Sydney. As I said, an enormous number of people are graduating from school. Thirty-five per cent of eligible applicants from greater Western Sydney put UWS down as their first to third preference. Basically, they are looking to improve on their share of first to third preferences, but they put no time frame on that or how they are going to go about doing that. How they are going to deliver on that goal really needs to be worked out and filled in.

Another goal is to provide high-quality student-centred experience at UWS to improve student success and graduation rates. That again looks at those failure or retention rates that I spoke about earlier. They are trying to get their rates to be comparable with the eight great universities, so that the first years are coming back to finish their second, third and fourth years and are not just leaving with a HECS debt for which they can do nothing.

The final goal is to ensure that UWS students learn to learn, and graduate with the capacity to participate actively and responsibly in a changing world. As I have mentioned before, I have employed a number of UWS graduates and they have a strong work ethic. I think everyone in Western Sydney does. One of the key defining features of outer metropolitan areas is that we do have a strong work ethic. That is certainly borne out in the data and material that they have collected for strategic goal No. 5. Again, they are looking at matching industry sectors by 2008. I think we should be looking to exceed the Sydney, Monash and St Lucia averages and really set ourselves up to be the premier destination, not just for our kids in Western Sydney, but also for the future.

I remember that, about 12 months ago, Rob Coombes came into my office with the strategic plan for the academic side of things. Certainly, I have been waiting five years for the strategic plan for the built environment of the campus. My local hockey association has been using two astroturf fields since 1995. The association has built its own amenities. It has over 1,200 members. For a lot of UWS people, their first experience of university is sport at university. That association has been waiting for car parking space for their players. The players are fined for parking on the university grounds. Although the association has looked at several potential parking sites, each time the university has changed its mind, or the goalposts, so to speak, and we are still waiting on the completion of the capital works master plan for each campus. I think that needs to be built into the strategic plan along with the academic matters. In terms of the subjects, I think nursing and education are critical in Western Sydney. A lot of work needs to be put into those two areas to really build on that and on the ability for those subjects to be done by mature students, external students and part-timers right across the greater Western Sydney region.
One student unionist—and this is not a constituency known for its sympathy towards my party—wrote to me, saying, ‘Events occurring within the university lately would seem to support your comments about poor administration and management at the most senior level.’ I think the plan is a step in the right direction. They are trying to head in the right direction and I commend them on their effort. I really hope that, by the time that final document is published, it will be a lot more substantial, with direction, deadlines and ways of achieving things. I am always there as a big supporter of UWS for further funding down those lines. Let me reiterate that there is no need for UWS to raise their HECS fees. They will maintain their funding under our government.

One last point that I have to mention in closing, and another issue that I have a grievance about, is to do with COOL Country FM. It is a very popular country music station in my area and the ACA is forcing it to close. I think there is every reasonable excuse for breaching its licence. I think the ACA has to work within the spirit of the act, otherwise, to me, it looks like an episode of Yes, Minister in which we have an empty hospital servicing people, with extraordinary outcomes. I think it is most bizarre that COOL Country 88.0 FM has been put off the air in the way it has been.

Health: Mental Illness

**Mr BYRNE (Holt) (5.18 p.m.)—**Tonight I rise to grieve about how we treat those with mental illness in our community. Those affected by mental illness, a very substantial proportion of our population, are being treated in a way that resembles social apartheid. I say this because of the experiences I have had as a federal member of parliament. People come to my doorstep to talk about some of the difficulties they have experienced with the mental health system and the stigma that carers of people with mental illness have experienced as a consequence of one of their loved ones experiencing mental illness.

I also want to talk about a damning report on the way in which we treat those with mental illness in our community. It is a great report by the Mental Health Council of Australia, entitled *Out of hospital, out of mind.* That is a very pertinent title. As to the extent of the problem, mental disorders contribute substantially to the burden of disease in Australia. The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare reports that mental disorders account for nearly 30 per cent of the non-fatal disease burden and that mental health is third after heart disease and cancer in terms of disease burden. Despite considerable advances in the mental health reform process over the last decade, much remains to be done. I am citing part of the executive summary of the report I have just mentioned.

The Australian National Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing indicates that approximately 20 per cent of the population experience a mental health problem each year. Such mental health problems include affective anxiety and substance abuse disorders. The prevalence of mental health problems in children and adolescents in Australia is 14 per cent of the population. Three per cent of Australian adults experience serious mental illnesses such as psychotic disorders.

You would think that, given the scope of the problem, this review would say that governments have actually put substantial resources into this area, particularly given the costs of it. However, let me give you a snapshot of the executive summary from the review that was conducted by the Mental Health Council of Australia. It says:

A nationwide review of the experiences of those who use and provide mental health services has documented that current community-based sys-
tems fail to provide adequate services. Specifically, these services are characterised by: restricted access; variable quality; poor continuity; lack of support for recovery from illness; and, protection against human rights abuses. In the view of consumers, carers and health professionals who provide services, this does not represent a failure of policy. Instead, it is a failure of implementation through: poor administration; lack of accountability; lack of ongoing government commitment to genuine reform; and, failure to support the degree of community development required to achieve high quality mental health care outside institutional settings.

Just imagine the outrage if you had, say, people with cardiac and thoracic problems who could not get access to services and who were actually dying as a consequence of that. Let me tell you what this actually means in terms of lack of adequate funding for community based services. The Mental Health Council of Australia report says:

Currently, 62% of persons with mental disorders do not utilise mental health services. Reported reasons include: stigma associated with mental disorders; fearfulness of medical treatments; poor distribution and costs associated with specialist services; and, inappropriate mix of medical and psychosocial services provided by government-financed systems.

In 2001, 2,454 persons died by suicide, constituting 4.4 per cent of all deaths in persons less than 75 years of age and 10.6 per cent of the potential years of life lost. The vast majority of suicides occur in persons with untreated mental disorders, particularly those with depression and recent alcohol or drug abuse. Although 38 per cent of persons with mental disorders access care, that care is largely provided by general practitioners. The decline in bulk-billing is placing further pressure on even this most basic form of mental and physical health care for people with mental disorders. So not only can they not access appropriate treatment through the services that have been created, they actually have to rely on GPs to provide this service.

As a direct consequence of our lack of community understanding of the current treatments available for mental disorders and our poorly resourced and poorly distributed service systems, the majority of people with mental disorders receive either no treatment or treatment that fails to meet international standards for optimal care. For example, on average, out of every six people with depression or anxiety disorders, fewer than one is currently receiving evidence based treatment. In this country, only one in six people suffering from a mental illness or serious depression et cetera is actually going to access the services they require.

The report states that Australia spends approximately seven per cent of its health budget on mental health—roughly $2.56 billion. While comparisons with other health care areas are problematic, mental health accounts for 13 per cent of the total disease burden and nearly 30 per cent of the non-fatal disease burden in Australia. This report says:

- Although international comparisons can only be approximate, other first world countries report spending 10 to 14 per cent of total health expenditure on mental health.

So we basically spend between three and seven per cent less on the provision of mental health services than other First World countries. The costs of all health areas continue to increase, due to increased population size and increased demands for the new treatments, which are very effective, particularly if they can be accessed. Despite the increased expenditure on mental health over the last decade, there is no evidence that the total proportion of total health expenditure devoted to mental health has increased. Increases in expenditure on mental health have
simply mirrored increases in the cost of providing other forms of health care.

Whilst the growth in Commonwealth expenditure was significant, over two-thirds of this was accounted for by the increase in pharmaceutical costs, rather than by planned or appropriate expansion of service systems or support for non-pharmacological treatments. What does that actually mean? It means:

- The experience of current consumers of mental health care is that they have severely limited access to primary care (exacerbated by current declines in bulk-billing rates)—those are not my words; those are the words of the experts who compiled this report—emergency care, specialist care and rehabilitation services.

Current care systems are perceived to be chaotic, under-resourced and overly focused on providing brief periods of medicalised care, largely within acute care settings. That was not the intention of the national mental health strategies. There have been two of them—one was between 1993 and 1998 and the other was between 1998 and 2003. What was supposed to happen was that people were to be taken out of institutionalised settings and put within the community, so that they could access community based care, but what this report quite clearly indicates is that governments have failed to adequately resource those community care services. What that means is that the carers and the general practitioners have had to absorb the costs of the care of those particular people. What that means is that people in this country are losing their lives, and that is a national shame and a national tragedy.

Let us also talk about one of the key issues that were identified: the ongoing human rights abuses and neglect. The report says:

- While the locus of care under the National Mental Health Strategy has moved from institutional to community-based care, no effective management system has evolved to provide either high quality care or the necessary supports for living productively within the wider community.

- Persons with mental illness report ongoing abuse within hospital forms of care and ongoing abuse and neglect in the wider community. Overt abuse is reported to occur within emergency departments and other acute care settings of general hospitals.

- Persons with mental illness report ongoing discrimination in key areas of employment and insurance, and restricted access to basic welfare services and support.

So if you have heart disease or some other form of disease—say, diabetes—you will get the appropriate care in this country; if you have a mental illness the odds are that you are not going to get appropriate care and, to boot, you are going to be discriminated against if you try to find a job or try to access the normal community based services that most people take for granted.

The fact is that this is happening when there is going to be an increased demand for mental health care. The future of mental health care will be one of increasing demand and increasing cost to health and welfare services. That is already happening. Experts are predicting that, particularly as a consequence of war et cetera, we are going to have greater numbers of people trying to access these services. In any other First World country, this would be regarded as a national tragedy and a national disgrace. We must be judged as a country by how we treat those who are least able to look after themselves, and that is a substantial proportion of our community. We must do something now, before more Australians die because they are not being provided with a service that they deserve and desperately need.
Education

Mr HARTSUYKER (Cowper) (5.28 p.m.)—I welcome this opportunity today to record the impact that the Senate will have on one of the most vibrant sectors in my electorate if they fail to pass a crucial piece of legislation, the Higher Education Legislation Amendment Bill 2003. Since the opening of the Southern Cross University campus at Coffs Harbour, the growth in the tertiary education sector has realised tremendous benefits for the city and the wider region. Despite the challenges of a regional location, the Coffs Harbour campus of Southern Cross University has enjoyed ongoing growth for almost a decade. However, for the Southern Cross campus to consolidate its position and build on its strengths, it is clear that reform of the tertiary education sector is necessary, and an increase in investment in crucial areas is essential. Thankfully, our highly regarded and very hardworking Minister for Education, Science and Training, Dr Brendan Nelson, has listened to the leaders of tertiary institutions, has consulted widely in the community and has detailed a new direction for this crucial sector. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the minister for his visit to my electorate on 17 November, which was very well received by the people in the electorate of Cowper.

From my perspective, by backing Australia’s future through tertiary reform Minister Nelson is presenting young students and universities alike with the security and incentive to invest in high-quality education. This is particularly the case in regional Australia, and it has never been more welcomed than at a campus such as the Coffs Harbour campus of Southern Cross University.

It is essential that all senators are aware that if they do not allow the higher education reforms to pass through their chamber they will be penalising both students and regional universities. That will hurt the people of Coffs Harbour and the wider region in my electorate. It will affect that area as hard as anywhere in Australia, if not more. It is absolutely essential that our senators carefully scrutinise the detail of these higher education reforms so that they understand how important many of the measures are to regional Australia.

I would like to know if the Senate wants to deprive the Coffs Harbour campus of Southern Cross University of the 7½ per cent funding increase on top of the recurrent funding they will receive under the government’s proposal. It is the highest loading offered to any institution outside the Northern Territory. Also, do these senators want to deprive the students of the Northern Territory of additional funding in the order of 30 per cent? I would like to know whether all of our senators would be willing to deny students the opportunity to study nursing at a local regional campus.

In regional Australia there is an ongoing challenge to educate enough nurses to meet the demand for their services. The federal government has responded to this with an additional 574 nursing places by the year 2007. Following meetings which I convened between Minister Nelson and the head professor and Executive Dean of the Division of Health and Applied Sciences at Southern Cross University, Jenny Graham, the minister has agreed to allocate an additional 41 places—in addition to the 20 places that the university itself has already committed. Allocating these additional places will give more students the opportunity to study nursing at Southern Cross University’s Coffs Harbour campus. It will also give the university much needed economies of scale with respect to administration and it will provide the vital critical mass that the course so greatly needs.
I ask the senators who are considering voting against the higher education reforms to speak to the young people in my electorate who wish to study nursing, to speak to the university leaders who have a vision for nursing studies at Southern Cross University and to speak to the health authorities who want to see more nurses educated in regional areas because they know that if they are trained in regional areas they are more likely to continue working in regional areas. It is absolutely vital.

I do not deny the parochialism that I display when talking of these specific measures for the higher education package. My concern is that the actions of a few senators are not limited merely to the impact they may have on the electorate of Cowper; they will also impact on students right around the country. There are other significant commitments in the higher education package which are specifically targeted at future students who will come from other regional and rural areas. For example, under the proposed legislation the Commonwealth learning scholarships will be introduced in 2004 to further assist rural and regional, low-income and Indigenous students with the costs associated with higher education. By 2007, 5,075 scholarships per year will be provided, valued at $2,000 each, to help students cover their educational costs, commencing with 2,500 scholarships in 2004. Another 2,030 new scholarships per year, valued at $4,000 each, will be offered by 2007 to assist rural and regional students with their accommodation costs when they move away from home to study. Subject to these measures passing through the Senate, these scholarships will commence in 2004, with an initial 1,500 scholarships to be awarded. These scholarships could well be the difference between rural and regional students having the chance to extend their formal education or, alternatively, failing to realise that potential. It is absolutely essential that senators who are considering voting against the legislation think of those regionally based students who face additional challenges and additional costs in obtaining a university degree. It is an extremely expensive exercise to move away from home and to study, and these scholarships help to support students in those vital endeavours when they first leave home and move on to tertiary studies.

In the broader context, we also need to respect the benefits which will be offered by other components of the higher education package: 25,000 marginally funded places will be fully funded by 2006-07; the HECS threshold will be raised to $30,000; the standard of teaching will be improved by a multi-million dollar investment in quality assurance; additional low-cost loans will be made available so that all Australians who would wish to do so will have the opportunity to attend a university; and universities will have more flexibility to determine the courses upon which they focus. The list goes on, but the message is consistent: more investment in our universities, more support for regional and rural students, an increase in assistance for regional and rural campuses and a focus on the true value of tertiary education.

I read with interest recent media reports on the issue of higher education. The lead story in one particular section in the Australian was about the vice-chancellors calling on the Senate to pass the higher education reforms and calling on the Senate to pass that legislation this year—vitally important. The Vice-Chancellor of Southern Cross University, Professor John Rickard, is on the record as welcoming many of the measures. This is what he said about the additional funding following the announcement of the higher education reforms as part of the budget package:
Regional universities make a substantial contribution to our communities, cultures and economies. But we and our students are often at a disadvantage because of our location and size. The budget recognises that situation and attempts to address it.

On the funding budget announcements he went on to say:

This means we can look to improve and develop programs, perhaps offering components of courses for the first time at the Coffs campus, or perhaps expanding the range of units already offered.

Offering courses for the first time at Coffs campus—that has got to be great news.

I would like to invite all senators who are thinking of voting against the additional funding for universities to visit the people on the north coast, look them in the eye and tell them they cannot have a 7½ per cent increase in funding. I want the Senate to tell young students from my electorate that they will not have the opportunity to apply for one of the thousands of scholarships that will be provided under this package. I would like senators to ask themselves whether they want to see young Australians miss out on a fully funded place at a university because these reforms did not pass through their chamber.

Southern Cross University is a vital institution in our community. My message to the Senate is: ‘Don’t adversely affect the educational outcomes for country kids. Get on board with the vice-chancellors and pass the legislation.’ Southern Cross University provides jobs, earns export dollars for our region and educates young Australians. It should be supported. Senators, get on board and support these university reforms.

Mr KING (Wentworth) (5.38 p.m.)—There is a quiet revolution going on in this parliament, and it is being led by the parliament’s Procedure Committee under our steady chairman, Mrs Margaret May, and supported by the member for Batman and others. It includes provisions such as the new intervention procedures in the Main Committee, new proposals in relation to second reading speeches and, most particularly—and this is what I want to refer to today—modernisation of the procedures of this House.

This parliament is being asked to support a motion for modernisation not of its procedures so much but of the language by which those procedures are understood. In short, we are being asked to modernise the standing orders which govern our work. I support the measure because it is of the utmost importance that those procedures are accessible to those who work with them—namely, to me and my colleagues in this place. So long as the rules are expressed clearly it seems to me that the use of contemporary language is desirable for the better understanding of our processes.

Let me give two brief examples. Proposed standing order 62 is a compilation of four of the current standing orders. Proposed standing order 62(b) refers to the requirement, when a member moves in the chamber, to bow to the Speaker on entering or leaving. The current provision refers to the need to make obeisance to the Speaker. I suppose we know what that means, but it is not very clear. That is one example of what I think is an improvement.
Many other provisions remain the same. For example, proposed standing order 65(b) is the same as the current standing order 55, dealing with interruptions of debate. There is no change whatsoever in the language. On the other hand, there are some words that have an antique or ancient meaning which continue to have resonance and which should, in the interests of clarity, retain their pristine meaning. In that context, I will use the example of the word ‘disorderly’, which is found in proposed standing order 91 and which remains a valuable word in the English language and for use in this place.

The procedures of this House are of the utmost importance, not just because they enable parliamentarians to carry out their duties but also because at the end of the day they are an important constraint on government in the interests of a free and open democracy. In fact, I would go so far as to say that, for the maintenance of liberty in this great nation of ours, the procedures of parliament are more effective than the Constitution itself. Having regard to their antiquity—and the most basic of our procedures were developed in the Middle Ages, before their use in the Australian context—they are durable and more effective in the maintenance of a representative democracy than any political party or philosophy might otherwise be. Why do I say that? Because, but for the House procedures, the government, with its working majority, would overrule every dissident or opposing voice, whether that be the Speaker, the opposition, a dissident backbencher committed to a different point of view from that of his or her own party, a difficult committee or even a critical media.

It is the procedures of parliament that guarantee parliament’s very autonomy, protected by the rules of privilege. These procedures apply indiscriminately to the most senior minister and the most humble backbencher. They control the flow of business and information to and from government and the representatives in the parliament and, while limiting government, the procedures give legitimacy to government and its actions and ultimately acceptance among the people of this great country of ours of what governments do through this parliament.

Perhaps finally and most importantly these procedures are a guide for every member, becoming part of their inner understanding of our system of representative democracy. It matters not whether the parliamentarian is a ministerial aspirant or simply someone who is happy to be a policy advocate: at the end of the day, it is the procedures which best protect our fundamental freedoms and values. They are the surest foundations of continuing stability and prosperity. I support the proposal.

Ms VAMVAKINOU (Calwell) (5.42 p.m.)—It is a pleasure to be speaking in the debate on the Procedure Committee’s report on the revised standing orders. As a new member of this parliament and of the Procedure Committee I found the experience of redrafting and reorganising the House standing orders interesting and challenging, because it was an excellent opportunity for me to study the standing orders at a level of detail that I might otherwise not have bothered to reach had I not been involved in this exercise.

I chose to nominate for the Procedure Committee because I thought that as a new member I should attempt something completely outside my comfort zone. The Procedure Committee thus qualified as an area of parliamentary engagement that I thought would be rather perfunctory and even perhaps boring in nature. However, my experiences on the Procedure Committee over the last two years have proved me quite wrong in those estimations. First, let me say that I am part of a committee whose membership is
dynamic and varied. It is a committee which works extremely well and in the best traditions of parliamentary committees. We have dealt with issues that have been exciting and challenging. All up, the Procedure Committee has turned out to be one that offers scope for creativity and forward planning.

The task of rewriting the standing orders was a time consuming exercise that stretched our knowledge of the English language in all its nuances. It was very much an exercise aimed at making the standing orders more logical, intelligible and readable. In short, our job was to produce a document that was user friendly and contemporary. It was a timely exercise given that it has been 40 years since the standing orders were written in their current form. As we worked through the text it was pretty obvious that the language and general terminology were of a bygone period. At times we found quaint and old world expressions that were, I thought, literally begging to be brought into the 21st century.

I believe that we have achieved our objective. After all, language is organic in nature. It is a living form of communication that reflects the nuances and expressions of a particular time. As such, the document in its new form has a contemporary expression. I personally enjoyed the time we spent rewriting the document, particularly because in a former life I was a language teacher and, being a fluent bilingual, I have a particular fascination with language as a means of communication and representation of its historical context.

I must confess, however, that at times I felt a little frustrated when, in search of the most appropriate language, our deliberations were caught up in protracted debates around the meaning of words. This was especially so when the legal eagles on our committee took a somewhat legalistic approach as we tried to settle on the most appropriate words. But at the end of the day it was less about legal terminology and more about simplifying the language for the purpose of making it more demotic in style. As a result I believe we have produced a worthwhile document that the general public can now read with ease, a document that new members and old members alike can better understand and follow. In fact the new index is much improved because it is now much easier to find things. This is a user-friendly document that will stand the test of the evolving nature of the English language in its Australian context for the next 50 years. We have even pushed the boundaries of modernisation by taking full advantage of information technology and making the House standing orders available on the Internet, thus providing instantaneous access.

I want to thank the Committee secretary Judy Middlebrook, our research officer Peter Fowler and our administrative assistant Anna Gadzinski for their amazing work. They certainly put in a lot of effort and they have a lot of knowledge of the standing orders. Finally, my thanks and commendations must go to our chair, the member for McPherson, who was absolutely terrific in the way she handled the tussles over words and phrases from time to time.

Mrs BRONWYN BISHOP (Mackellar) (5.46 p.m.)—I rise to support the report on the revised standing orders that was introduced by the Procedure Committee earlier today. Members who have already spoken have given the history of the evolution of our standing orders over time, by pointing out that the authority for our standing orders comes from the Constitution. It is quite worthy of comment that for the first time in this document you will find that we record where the source in the Constitution is.
The task was given to us to make the standing orders more accessible and easier to follow so that when someone is looking for a particular area covered by the standing orders they can expect to find the standing orders in sequential order. As the member for Calwell said, the way the chapters have been arranged makes it much easier for people who are not familiar with the standing orders per se or are coming to terms with learning how they operate, and it certainly will be a much more user-friendly document.

I commend the chairman of the committee, the honourable member for McPherson, on the excellent work that she and other members of the committee did. They worked assiduously, going through each standing order and arranging it into the new order. It was quite a laborious task, yet it was also informative. Sometimes the history behind the way in which a standing order has evolved can be quite informative as to the way it should be interpreted today. As I have said, it was a reasonably laborious task but indeed there was a great deal of amusement and camaraderie among the members of the committee in going through the standing orders. We had interesting discussions on the real meaning of a particular term and the way in which it fits into context and how a simple change can alter the real intent of a standing order. All those things had to be paid attention to as we worked our way through the standing orders.

When she introduced the document today, the chairman noted that the House operated on temporary standing orders for a long time, despite the fact that there was a recommendation that there should be formal standing orders. It was not until 1950 that they were achieved. In this day and age we could not think that there could be any time delay in accepting the new document, although we want people to read it and to comment upon it. But at the end of the day I think that people will find that the document will be enormously useful to them and far more accessible than the one that currently exists.

Debate (on motion by Mrs Gallus) adjourned.

**BILLS RETURNED FROM THE SENATE**

The following bill was returned from the Senate without amendment or request:
- Criminal Code Amendment (Hamas and Lashkar-e-Tayyiba) Bill 2003

**ASSENT**

Messages from the Governor-General reported informing the House of assent to the following bills:
- Criminal Code Amendment (Hamas and Lashkar-e-Tayyiba) Bill 2003
- Superannuation (Government Co-contribution for Low Income Earners) Bill 2003
- Superannuation (Government Co-contribution for Low Income Earners) (Consequential Amendments) Bill 2003
- Superannuation (Surcharge Rate Reduction) Amendment Bill 2003
- Telecommunications Interception and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2003

**MAIN COMMITTEE**

The **DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. D.G.H. Adams)**—The Speaker has advised the House that the Deputy Speaker has fixed Tuesday, 25 November 2003, at 4.30 p.m., as the time for the next meeting of the Main Committee, unless an alternative day or hour is fixed.

**BILLS REFERRED TO MAIN COMMITTEE**

Mr **LLOYD (Robertson)** (5.51 p.m.)—by leave—I move:

That the following bills be referred to the Main Committee for further consideration:
- Customs Legislation Amendment Bill (No. 2) 2003
Mr CIOBO (Moncrieff) (5.52 p.m.)—It gives me great pleasure to rise to speak to the States Grants (Primary and Secondary Education Assistance) Amendment Bill 2003. This is an important bill that strikes at the core of a major concern in the community—that is, the education of our young children and the education of young Australians. I am very pleased that in this bill there are additional funding measures for capital grants for non-government schools from 2004 to 2007 as well as additional funding for school literacy and numeracy programs and projects for 2003 and 2004.

I had the pleasure of having the Minister for Education, Science and Training in my electorate on Thursday, 20 November. One of the initiatives I took with the education minister was to convene a roundtable of all the school principals in my electorate. I wrote to some 28 schools inviting them to meet face-to-face with the education minister, because I believe it is fundamentally important for there to be an opportunity at grassroots level for the educators to be able to speak with the education decision makers that exist in this parliament. I was very pleased that, out of the 28 schools, some 14 principals were able to come along to my education roundtable and speak with Dr Brendan Nelson for a good period of time about issues of concern to them about education.

A part of that was the discussion of funding. I would be very pleased this afternoon to canvass some of the points that were raised as well as to highlight some of the facts. It has been very clear to me for a long while that there are elements within the education system who believe that in some way they gain by misrepresenting, misleading and twisting the truth about education funding in this country. I have been gravely disappointed that on numerous occasions one of the worst offenders in this regard has been
the Queensland Teachers Union. This union does not seem to be concerned at all with informing the community about decisions that the various tiers of government make. Rather, this union seems more concerned with making sure that parents are scared and are misunderstanding the division of responsibility between non-government and government schools when it comes to education funding.

It was very clear to me from my education roundtable that there are a variety of points of view about the best way forward when it comes to education funding. It was very clear to me from the 14 or so people who sat at the roundtable that there are a variety of views—each person cherishing and sincerely holding their point of view but each one divergent in what they perceive to be the best way that taxpayers could invest their money in the education of our young Australians. Some people were of the view that there should be absolutely no government funding flowing to non-government schools. I disagree with that point of view; I see it as a very hardline point of view. Nonetheless, that was one part of the spectrum that was represented at the roundtable.

Likewise, there are other points of view that are found in the community—for example, that perhaps governments should invest money in education at both government and non-government schools. As the member for Moncrieff, I am very proud to be a supporter of a system that enables parents to make a decision about where they would like their children to be educated. A crucial component of this is recognising that parents who make the choice to send their children to non-government schools do so after they have paid their taxes to the Commonwealth and to state governments, a proportion of which covers the costs of the education of their children.

Yet, despite that, they still make the decision to send their children to a non-government school, believing for some reason that their child might get a better education, that their child might get a more solid grounding in values, that a particular school offers certain facilities that they are after or that a particular school might offer a view on life that they would like to instil in their children. Even though they have paid their taxes they will still make further contributions towards that school to ensure that their child is educated. Some non-government schools charge very little but others, it is widely known, charge significant amounts of money each year for children to be educated.

It seems to me a great shame that there are people in this chamber who, without any hesitation at all, are willing to lift the scab on class warfare. They are willing to make out that what drives Howard government policy when it comes to education is not a belief that parents have a right to choose and not a belief in investing in an education system in government and non-government schools but rather some curious and indeed spurious notion that it is a conspiracy by the government frontbench to reinvest money in their old school system.

I say to all people listening and to the parents in my electorate that nothing could be further from the truth. When you look at the facts and when you turn your mind to the funding that is allocated between government and non-government schools, you see very clearly that the Howard government has increased funding to both sectors of our education system—both government and non-government.

**Mr Sawford**—Where did you get that information?

**Mr CIOBO**—When you look at the fact that, for example, this government this year alone is committing $6.6 billion towards the
education system, an increase of over 80 per cent since we were elected in 1996, you start to see that this government is truly committed to the education of our young Australians.

Mr Sawford—With accrual accounting, we don’t even know.

Mr CIOBO—I hear the interjections that come from the member opposite about how we should be suspicious about the facts that I am receiving. Let us be very clear on one thing. I will talk about a Queensland perspective. At least the Howard government is up front and transparent when it comes to school funding. The great difficulty that I have in Queensland is that I cannot get from the education minister in Queensland actual funding allocations for government schools. I can get it for non-government schools when it comes from the Commonwealth government, and I know how much the Commonwealth government provides to the Queensland state government, but what the Queensland state Labor government will not show is how it apportions its funding not only between the various schools in my electorate but also between the various schools up and down the length and breadth of Queensland.

I have to scratch my head when I look around my own electorate, for example, and I see schools that have yet to receive a single lick of paint on many classrooms. William Duncan school, for example, has a maintenance budget of about $15,000 per annum; yet 10 kilometres up the road the Queensland state government is investing millions and millions of dollars into P-12 schools. Where is the equity in that? Where is the equity from the state government? The philosophical position that the Labor Party purport to have says that they are so concerned with equity, and yet they will refuse to disclose the reasons some government schools—the P-12 schools in Queensland—get significant amounts of funding, significant computer facilities and significant investments in capital works and yet other government schools receive virtually nothing and they are in a situation where they have to scrape by and prevail upon the school community to obtain funding to try to do basic maintenance within the school grounds. Why won’t the Queensland Labor education minister disclose that information?

The bill today deals with capital grants as one primary aspect. In this budget, we have committed a further $48.2 million for capital grants for non-government schools over four years. There has already been money committed to government schools. When you look at the information, you see that across the country there have been significant increases towards both government and non-government schools from the Commonwealth government. From 1996 until 2001, Commonwealth capital grants totalled $1.85 billion, of which 70.5 per cent was allocated to government schools and 29.3 to non-government schools. So when it comes to capital grants, the Howard government, which the Labor Party would have us all believe is only concerned with funding the old school tie, actually funded $1.85 billion from the period from 1996 to 2001, of which over 70 per cent went to government schools and less than 30 per cent to non-government schools.

Let us also look at our constitutional responsibility. It is important to know the parameters of this debate. There is a reason schools are called state government schools. It is because the primary funding source for those schools is state government. There is also a historical agreement between the Commonwealth and the state governments around Australia that the Commonwealth government will pick up the tab and be the primary funder of non-government schools. I encourage and urge all Australians to be very
clear on that fact, to actually slice through the meaningless drivel that comes from education unions—who would openly and willingly seek to misinform the community because they believe there are some politically opportunistic points they can score by doing so—and to actually find out the information. I have been very pleased that, in my electorate, school principals have been proactive in making sure that parents do know the facts when it comes to school funding. I have been very pleased to see a number of newsletters from school principals in which the principals give a breakdown of funding between the various tiers of government and the allocation of not only capital works funding but recurrent funding that is provided to schools.

If we look at funding allocations for schools, for example, we see that in 2004 poor schools will receive funding of approximately $4,534 for primary and $5,987 for secondary. Schools that serve wealthy communities only receive $887 for primary and $1,171 for secondary. This is as a consequence of this government’s decision to introduce the new socioeconomic status measure when making decisions about the level of funding that should apply to schools. It certainly is a vast step forward compared to the old ERI system that existed under the Labor Party. It is a system that now says, when we make decisions about the level of funding that should flow to schools, we do so on the basis of what is proper, taking into account the socioeconomic status of the parents concerned.

Schools in very needy communities will receive 70 per cent of what it costs to educate a student in a government school, compared to a figure of 13.7 per cent for the schools that serve the wealthiest communities. The fact is that, under this government, all schools are getting more money. In addition to that, funding has increased each and every year since 1996. Federal funding for public schooling has been rising in recent budgets more rapidly than state and territory funding and, in 2003, will be 50 per cent higher than when we took office in 1996. Over the same period, the increase in student numbers in government schools has only been 1.4 per cent.

There are some interesting questions that can be asked about this. I speak from a position where the Gold Coast has the highest concentration, on a per capita basis, of private schools. The question can be asked: why are parents, on the facts, appearing to be more willing and are wanting to choose a private school education for their children over the public system? There are some who will recoil from that statement and say it is because the Howard government is not giving enough money to government schools. But I think it is pretty clear that that argument is false.

Perhaps a very significant part of the reason that parents are choosing private schools is one significant and important word in education: values. Increasingly we see parents turning towards private schools because they believe private schools offer a greater opportunity for their children to be schooled in values. They would like their children to have a moral compass that goes with them throughout their lives. An important part of that is of course the fact that there are many schools that share and are built on a Christian heritage, or indeed any heritage, that is available at a variety of schools that offer and teach children the ways of a religion that particular parents might choose to school their children in.

Values in education are something that the government are unambiguously committed to. We believe fundamentally that, if Australian students are going to have a very good start in life, values in education are a significant and important part of that. Likewise, we
firmly believe in the importance of quality teaching. That is also part of the reason that the Howard government are making sure that we are providing increased funding for quality teaching and superior professional training for teachers not only while they are at university but also once they graduate in terms of postgraduate education.

This particular bill, as I have touched upon, provides additional funding for school literacy and numeracy programs and projects for the years 2003 and 2004. Improving literacy and numeracy is an ongoing educational priority for the Howard government. National literacy and numeracy goals have been agreed to by education ministers as has the implementation of a national literacy and numeracy plan, the latter including the development of national benchmarks for years 3, 5, 7 and 9, against which student progress is now assessed. I had a discussion on this exact point with Terry Ball, the principal of William Duncan State School. I was very pleased to note that although the children sometimes found the exams daunting—indeed, as they find any exam—they recognised that there was the benefit as a consequence of having something against which they could measure their performances.

This bill makes additional provision for literacy and numeracy programs, including $33.79 million for the Strategic Assistance for Improving Student Outcomes program for 2004 and additional funding for the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies and Projects program of $3.46 million for 2003 and $7.4 million for 2004. All states and territories are now testing and reporting against national reading and numeracy benchmarks, and the results are progressively being published through the National report on schooling in Australia. This is an important component of this bill, because it means that parents now have the opportunity to determine the quality of the schooling that their child receives. It came about in response to calls from the community that children were making it right through the education system without, in certain cases, even having a basic understanding of literacy and numeracy. As a way of trying to close that gap and trying to make sure we are actually delivering what we are attempting to deliver, we have introduced these literacy and numeracy benchmarks, something that I fundamentally believe parents are very supportive of, and I know this from speaking with them.

When Dr Brendan Nelson came to the Gold Coast for the third time, last Thursday, he took the opportunity to talk with parents and with principals. It is clear to me that, once apprised of the facts, parents believe and understand that the government believe in empowering them to make decisions about education. Rather than the rhetoric that I am sure we will hear from opposition members, and rather than the kind of false promise that they make about restoring fiscal imbalance—as they would put it—between non-government and government schools, what we need to focus on are the actual educational outcomes that are being achieved.

One thing I have never once heard answered by those who are opposed to the government’s spending priorities and the fact that we are giving record amounts to state governments for government schools is the question of what they would do if all of the students in the non-government sector suddenly became dependent on the state for the provision of their education. What would they do if millions of children left the non-government sector and went across to the government sector to obtain their education? The fact is that I will fiercely support and stand behind parents that choose non-government schools, not because I believe they are superior to government schools but because I believe parents have a right to make that choice. When they have already
paid their taxes and they reach into their pockets one more time to pay education fees, they do not do so because they are filthy rich; they do so because they are aspirational and they want a quality education for their children. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr SAWFORD (Port Adelaide) (6.12 p.m.)—Once upon a time, member for Moncrieff, you could actually work out the cost of education. Once upon a time we could look at the budget papers and everyone in this House could glean, under the system of cash accounting—even you could find out—exactly how much money was spent on education. But we now have a system of accrual accounting, and this information is hidden even from you and from me—from everyone in this House except the executive. When analysed by any country in the world, whether it is Canada, the United States or any of the European countries, it is shown that the privatisation of education costs more and is more inefficient. The information that the member for Moncrieff used today he gleaned from ministers’ press releases and executive government. That is where it came from; it did not come from the budget papers. The member for Moncrieff criticised the Queensland government, but he failed spectacularly to admit that there are criticisms of the Howard government which are exactly the same. The truth is he does not know. The truth is none of us know except the executive. That is the great pity of all of this.

The States Grants (Primary and Secondary Education Assistance) Amendment Bill 2003 provides funding for capital grants to non-government schools so as to maintain the 2003 funding level for the next four years and continue funding in 2004 for targeted programs for educationally disadvantaged students and for literacy and numeracy projects. But the legislation should be recognised for what it does not do. The bill does nothing about capital needs in government schools. The bill fails to adequately protect the public interest and the wealth created by the Commonwealth funding for capital investment for both religious and private organisations. The bill fails accountability and public reporting requirements about the allocation of capital funds, particularly against needs criteria. There is no transparency whatsoever.

Without doubt, this additional funding provided for high-fee students under the Commonwealth general recurrent program will lead to increased capital investment in those schools, increasing the resources gap between them and other government and non-government schools. I have a friend who is a principal of a private school—I will not embarrass him by naming him—and they are embarrassed by the amount of money that is coming to their school from the Commonwealth government they are going to waste. They are trying to work out how many more swimming pools or luxuries they can introduce into their school using the money. These issues are made more significant by research findings which suggest that there is a correlation between the quality of school infrastructure and educational outcomes. Labor recognises that the issues involved are complex and sensitive, and they should preferably be considered as part of a comprehensive response to the act as a whole rather than as a partial response to this aspect of the capital grants program.

New legislation for all Commonwealth programs for schools for the quadrennium beginning 2005 is due to be introduced in the parliament by mid-2004 at the latest. That is when the substantive debate will take place. It is exactly on that point that I wish to provide some history. Thirty years ago, in May 1973, the Karmel report on education was published in this country. At the time, it was recognised as a watershed report and was
generously praised, and many of its recommendations were implemented. However, in hindsight, the Karmel report had major failings: the first was the failure to recognise the resource needs of primary schools, both government and non-government; the second was the failure to recognise technical education in a nation traditionally short of technical skills; and the third was the failure to appreciate the public acceptance of and support for diversity within the public secondary school system. The educational systems that were favoured by the Karmel report were higher education, senior secondary academic education and private education. I do not suggest that the Karmel report did this deliberately; it did not. It was essentially egalitarian in nature. Nevertheless, that is what occurred.

Primary schools are the foundation of our education system. Integrated secondary or technical education simply does not work, and ordinary parents have voted with their feet on that particular matter. Essentially, for the past 20 years the needs of primary, junior, secondary and technical education have been ignored. As Labor has suggested, there ought to be a comprehensive response to the act as a whole. Australia needs a white paper on all the education sectors, and it particularly needs to address the failure of the past two decades in the primary, junior, secondary, technical and public education sectors.

The Karmel report’s rationale recommended a comprehensive secondary school system, and it was essentially positive and egalitarian, as I said. However, the reality has been that increasing numbers of parents and students have rejected the weakness of a uniform public system, particularly at the year 11 and 12 levels. A diverse and very strong public education system that was one of the best in the world—with academic high schools, vocational and technical schools, selective technical and academic high schools, boys schools, girls schools, agricultural schools and so on—was replaced with a single comprehensive high schools system. Diversity, once the province of the public education sector, became the province of the private education sector. For many parents, the public system at the secondary level no longer met their needs and, slowly but surely, if they could afford it, they walked the walk. Of course, many of the so-called private schools that the member for Moncrieff referred to are funded 95 per cent to 100 per cent by the government. They are public schools, but they just happen to have another name.

It is certainly true that there has been enormous growth in vocational education in the last 10 years, but it is off a very low base. It is largely unfunded and is based on the goodwill of many teachers who will soon retire, and their trained replacements do not exist. But the more significant failure of the Karmel report was the lack of acknowledgement of the resource needs of primary schools. That is why grants for literacy and numeracy are implicit in this legislation. For that reason, I want to put on the public record how that all came about—inadequate as the current guidelines may be.

In 1978, five years after the publication of the Karmel report, the South Australian Primary Principals Association responded to the failure to resource primary schools adequately, and they organised a campaign called ‘Primary means first’. The response from the education community in South Australia was unedifying, to say the least. The education department said it was divisive. The Education Union agreed at that time and was not interested. The Secondary Principals Association, TAFEs and universities refused to comment. Similar campaigns began in all other states, and they all failed. As a minor player in that campaign, I was actually shocked at the negativity and the blatant
white-anting and spoiling by other sectors of education. I really found it difficult to believe that people in other sectors of education did not share the reality that every primary school student becomes a high school student, a TAFE student or a university student. The lesson was to be learnt again and again, and then some more.

In the early 1980s, I convened the second campaign focusing on the needs of primary schools. It was called ‘Into the nineties’. I was then the president of the Adelaide area principals association. It was not a polite campaign like the first; it was a bit like me: it was in your face. It is important to note that every primary school staff and school council, bar one—there is always one—supported the campaign. Six hundred schools in South Australia supported the campaign—every one of them. It was revenue neutral, and over a period of five years it aimed to place in each primary school one additional teacher for each 100 children. It was attainable because of falling enrolments in secondary schools. Although unwilling at first, the teachers union came on side. Three prominent secondary principals supported the campaign. The education department seemed to be beside itself—it could find no fault in the accuracy of the data or the research. How could it? It was supplied to me by a senior departmental officer. Being revenue neutral, it was politically acceptable. The department decided to divide and rule. It was agreed that a primary review be set up—the traditional inquiry—and the majority of conservative principals in my organisation thought that was a fair thing. They thought the review was good. And it was good, but nothing happened. Years of energy and belief were blown away. In 2001, a fourth campaign was launched by the Australian Primary Principals Association called ‘Our futures’. I wish it every success, but I am not holding my breath.

At a political level, after the 1990 federal election I was elected chair of the Labor caucus education and employment committee. Along with people like Roger Price—who is still here—Carolyn Jacobsen, Elaine Darling, Mary Crawford and others, we convinced the then Labor government to set up an inquiry into literacy in Australian schools. The subsequent federal government report, *The literacy challenge*, showed that there were literacy failure rates of up to 30 per cent in our public and private schools. The response from the usual quarters was again unedifying. Education departments around the country, as is their wont, denied the problem. Teachers unions unfortunately took the view that it was an attack on teachers, which it clearly was not. It was simply an identification of unmet resource needs and the need for appropriate data. Several academics wrote in the media that there were higher priorities and that they doubted the accuracy of the report. Nothing was more predictable than the response of those three groups. Unfortunately, it has ever been so. Nevertheless, several years on, good principals and good teachers acted upon the findings. They did it because good teachers and good principals always do the right thing.

In the previous parliament, as deputy chair of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Workplace Relations, I convinced committee members, among whom the government had a nine to four majority, that an investigation was warranted into the funding of education in this country—public and private, primary and secondary, and TAFE and higher education. It has never ever been done. It should be done. The minister refused to allow the inquiry. Education in Australia is funded on the basis of historical traditions, vested interests and privilege. Under this government, even that has been exacerbated. Resourcing education is not based on a sound educa-
tional rationale nor on quantitative or empirical research, as it should be. As I said, the minister at the time refused the inquiry. It was too dangerous for the privileged and elite vested interests he tried to advantage and protect, I suppose.

For any market to grow, you need efficiency. Education is no different from anything else in that regard. The fact remains that the government deliberately favour particular groups: one per cent, the elite; 10 per cent, the in-betweens; and 30 per cent, other non-government schools that are really public schools. It is a misnomer to call them private schools; they are no more private than I am. The one per cent are the category 1 and 2 schools, the 10 per cent are the independent system and the 30 per cent are basically the Catholic system. That is not in the national interest.

Education is different from most markets. It requires equality and freedom—two values that have gone missing under this government. They talk about values. There is no equality in education in this country; there is no freedom. Equality cannot be achieved where a public system is downgraded, where regional and provincial areas are ignored and where need, disadvantage and special circumstances are not taken into account. The national interest is not served when the only freedom that is encouraged is the self-indulgent freedom of choice so championed by this government, based on the ability to pay. True recognition of freedom is based on merit, taking into account all the circumstances of need and disadvantage. Unfortunately, that seems to be beyond the intellectual capacity of the Howard government.

The bill maintains at the 2003 level grants for strategic assistance for improving student outcomes and restores funding to 2002 levels for national initiatives in literacy and numeracy. Essentially, these measures fail to address the bias against public education endemic in this government’s intentions. However, it is not only the federal government that is a threat to public education. During this parliament, the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education and Training investigated boys education. At the beginning of the inquiry, the Commonwealth Department of Education, Science and Training informed us that over the last 20 years the differential attainments for boys and girls had blown out by almost 20 percentage points. If that were true, that would be alarming. Education departments and teachers union representatives across Australia went into denial. Academia split down the middle this time. But, thank goodness, good principals and good teachers knew there was a problem, ignored the orthodoxies and got on with the job. A public school in a lowly socio-economic area in Brisbane recognised the literacy and numeracy problems with boys as well as girls and, after four years of hard work, got their attainment levels for boys and girls to acceptable standards. The same was true of an affluent public school in Sydney, as it was for public schools in public housing estates in Tasmania and South Australia.

As federal politicians I guess we all know: it is the economy, stupid. As good principals and good teachers know: it is the quality of the educational program, stupid. At all the good schools, public or private, there were common factors: a good principal, good senior staff, good teachers, supportive parents, active and structured learning programs, regular measurement of attainment and well-organised resources. The orthodoxies promoted by the education bureaucrats during the nineties, some teachers union ideologues and many in academia were ignored and nowhere to be seen in those good schools. But all of those schools implemented their successful literacy and numeracy programs at a
Poorer schools had to abandon much of their expressive arts and enrichment programs due to lack of staff and resources; no sport, no art was the name of the game.

Why should disadvantaged schools, in order to meet literacy and numeracy benchmarks, have to sacrifice the more liberal aspects of their education programs? That is what is happening in our state schools. That is what is helping people to walk the walk.

One of those affluent schools in Sydney—I think it was in Rose Bay—raised $100,000 through an active parents body. That paid for the salaries of staff and for resources to raise the attainment levels of boys and girls in that school to the expected levels. All this indicates that public education is underfunded. Precious taxpayer dollars should be spent to meet the greatest needs, not to support the already privileged.

Parents watch the toleration of inadequate public schools, they watch the priorities and they watch the consistency and when they do not find it—and if they can afford it, although there are many occasions when they cannot and they do it—they walk the walk to so-called private schools. Parents are not silly. They are aware of the collapse of state banks, HIH, One.Tel, Ansett, Compass, Impulse, Franklins and AMP. They know what happens when you undercapitalise, when you offer discount prices and poor service and when you give the CEO or senior staff millions while paying staff a pittance. I hope people watching Telstra at least take note.

This government seems to think that we ought to be telling children and parents from low-income or geographically isolated families that they are responsible for making up the disparities between themselves and children with personal laptop computers and category 1 schooled and university educated parents. There are too many blatant attacks on public education in this country. It is time that people who can stand up for public education actually do so. Many prominent Australians will put their name to public education, because they benefited and they want to see it continued because it is the base of our democracy. There are others who need some prodding and there are a few whose arm needs to be held up, but they are there. This country cannot afford to put public education—70 per cent of the education market—at risk. It is what our precious democracy is based upon.

I am afraid for public education; we all ought to be afraid. There are too many educational bureaucrats, too many academics, too much sectoral jealousy and too many ideologues on a course that is weakening public consensus to fund public education. Political will is driven by market forces but it needs to be balanced by social good. It is the task of government to get the balance right. On that the government has demonstrably failed, and this bill does nothing to redress the imbalance. If the various education sectors keep on contradicting, spoiling and white-anting each other, governments are given excuses not to act. It is time to draw a line in the sand for public education, and there is no better place to start than by redressing the bias against primary, junior secondary, public and technical education which has occurred in the past 20 years.

It is time to conduct a major educational review. It is time to collect the quantitative and empirical research and to commission the longitudinal studies. It is time for the supporters of public and technical education to get the political smarts. If the Anglican diocese of Melbourne can get it right, so can everybody else. It is time that the teaching profession—and the various state teachers unions—not only got the political smarts but developed the courage to carry out in schools what it knows to be right and take a stronger stance to ignore all the silliness that engulfs
Mr BILLSON  (Dunkley)  (6.32 p.m.)—It is with some pleasure that I follow the member for Port Adelaide—as I seem to have on a number of occasions relating to training, higher education and general schooling—in this debate on the States Grants (Primary and Secondary Education Assistance) Amendment Bill 2003. The thing that stands out most, and it is probably fortunate that the previous Deputy Speaker is no longer in the chair, is that there was very little to do with the bill before the House canvassed in the member for Port Adelaide’s speech. That is fair enough—he is entitled to have a chat about things that are remotely germane to the bill itself—but the irony is, as he himself recognised, that this bill has some rather particular purposes and there are ample opportunities at the upcoming renegotiation of forward financial commitments for the public education system for many of the issues that he canvassed to be discussed.

I do not doubt for one minute—in fact I admire and welcome—the passion of the member for Port Adelaide when he talks about education. But what interested me most though was that in doing so he did highlight the very factors that seem to contradict the outcome he is trying to achieve. He talked about the great energy and belief that has not gone anywhere. He reflected on the frustration that the commitments made by good, able, talented, visionary people in education have not always amounted to the outcomes that he and I—and I am sure many in our community—could have hoped for. I think that to highlight why that is the case is to simply embrace the member for Port Adelaide’s contribution. It was so heavily laden with dogma and prejudice and a very philosophically skewed perspective on what was good and what was bad that many of the insightful comments that he made will never get a chance to be ventilated. I say that because, to enable those ideas, that passion, that belief and that energy to be given its best expression, one should not start at the very beginning by putting a fence around that very thinking, that very commitment and that very input.

I am quite receptive to some of the ideas that the member for Port Adelaide has put forward. I do not think you could ever discredit the need for a thorough examination of the way our education system in general is funded. It is cursed by our federation and the shared responsibilities for many of the funding arrangements and it is nobbled by the limited jurisdictional influence of, in this case, the Australian government, which has to keep providing more and more cash but has very limited influence on what happens with it. But it is brought to a halt, it is grounded and rubbed into the dirt by the kind of dogma that the member for Port Adelaide spoke of. When one looks at some of his comments about the need for empirical data to shape the way funds are made available, one notes that one of the criticisms of the SES funding model—being the way in which funding is made available to non-government schools—is that it looks only at the neighbourhood from which students are coming. It looks at an average of their socioeconomic circumstances to determine what is a reasonable level of subsidy towards the cost of the child’s education.

Some would say that is not good enough; that, if you are a poor person living in a wealthy neighbourhood, you are going to be cursed by the wealth of your neighbourhood and the funding that you attract that then goes on to your non-government school will be reduced because of it. Some would say...
the family of a very wealthy person living in a modest suburb would attract a greater proportion of funding than they would be entitled to if you looked at that family’s particular circumstances. But, if you take the member for Port Adelaide’s point through to its logical conclusion, you get right back into an area of dogma that the ALP is so offended by: the notion of an educational voucher where the funding and the resources that are made available, based on empirical data, are determined by a particular specific assessment of the means, the income and the resources of the family and from that is derived an amount of funds which goes into the educational institution that they choose. That seems the logical conclusion of the member for Port Adelaide’s contribution, but I am sure he would be aghast at the suggestion of an education learning entitlement voucher, or something like that, because it runs against the very things that he believes in. That takes us right back to the problem that he illustrated more than ever: dogma is dogging innovation in education. So the greatest advocate of reform, regeneration and enthusiasm actually nobbles all of his contribution by the very single factor that has dragged many good ideas down to their knees.

He went on to talk about equality and freedom, but wishes to deny people, families and students the right to choose the educational pathway that they feel most suits them. I thought that was a freedom—a freedom to exercise that judgment. In the case of many non-government schools, it is a freedom to not only pay your taxes but also then find additional resources from your family budget to support that educational choice, to assign a priority to life’s needs and to invest in a child’s future. That sounds like a freedom.

He also spoke of equality. Again, in effect, you could argue that many parents sending their children to non-government schools would love equality with the funding made available for the children of a similar circumstances family going to a government school. In fact, there is no case or example of a student from a real-life family, no matter how poor they are, attracting more money for a non-government school than the wealthiest student from a household of quite significant means going to a government school. I am sure that the person of modest means supplementing their tax money with some additional funds to send their child to a non-government school would have a view about how equality is playing out for them, and they probably would not be that impressed.

Again, the evidence which the member for Port Adelaide almost cried out for undermines his argument, and that is the problem with the Labor Party’s education policy. It is hugely rich on slogans but bereft of ideas. In reality, Labor show no demonstrated capacity to implement these ideas that are shouted at members of the government and at anyone interested in the community, but these ideas would never be able to be implemented because some of them are so internally inconsistent with each other that we would end up with an absolute shemozzle.

This bill before the House that we are discussing today will amend the States Grants (Primary and Secondary Education Assistance) Act 2000, implementing the Australian government’s 2003-04 budget initiatives for schools. There are a number of elements to the bill, and the joy of Labor speakers has been to say, ‘In this bill there’s no great mention of public education funding streams.’ But, as the member for Port Adelaide confessed himself, that is handled in another piece of legislation. So it does not take a rocket scientist to work out why there is not a huge amount of debate and discussion around public school funding in the text of the bill itself. That is not the purpose of the
The purpose of the bill is to provide additional funding for capital grants for non-government schools in the years from 2004 to 2007 and to put in an additional funding boost for school literacy and numeracy projects and programs for 2003-04. It also seeks to maintain a commitment to a capital grants program that supports non-government schools, and to do that a sum of money is being set aside through this bill: about $48.2 million for capital grants for non-government schools over those four years. There is an additional $210 million for literacy and numeracy programs. In essence, that is what the bill is about and that is why it does not canvass some of the issues that the member for Port Adelaide discussed, because it never sought to canvass those issues.

The government’s primary objective, which has been talked about here before, is to provide funding that will achieve a quality education for all Australians, whether it be through the government public school system—the system I very happily passed through—or through the non-government system. The fundamental principle underlying the government’s role is that education matters, and it is an appropriate use for and target of government taxes. We want to support the rights of parents to choose the educational environment that they believe best suits their child and best supports the future development and life opportunities of that child. That could be a government or a non-government school. To suggest that there is some bias against one in favour of the other, as the member for Port Adelaide suggested, is simply not borne out by the facts.

In terms of total enrolments, government schools attract about 68 per cent of the available student population but attract about 76 per cent of the public funding. Again, that is a crashing blow against the claims made by the member for Port Adelaide. If you look through that data and at the choices that families are making, you see that the funding programs, if anything, are skewed in favour of government schools and will continue to be so. It has been that way for many years. The family choice, their independent choice, to send their children to a non-government school is something that this government still looks to the family to support. It is not as if it is a complete opt out. Those families still pay their taxes, and we return a portion of them to the school community where they have chosen to send their children.

The Australian government at the moment has the highest level of spending ever on government schools. In 2003-04, it will spend $935 million more on government schools and their students than Labor did in 1996, which represents a 60 per cent increase over what it was in Labor’s last year in government. All states and territories receive increased funding every year for their government schools. As has often been canvassed in this place, no state or territory government has kept pace with the funding growth that the Australian government has offered. Again, it undermines dramatically the claims made by the member for Port Adelaide. But clearly there is scope—and this is the frustration—for state and territory governments to match the funding increases of the Australian government. With the GST revenue that comes their way and the flood of revenue, particularly in the state of Victoria, from stamp duty, speeding fines and what seems to be the fire sale of government land, which was reported recently in a metropolitan newspaper, there is clearly scope for Victoria and in fact all state and territory governments to increase their funding commitments. But they have not; they have chosen not to. It is a choice—a choice about where to direct those resources.
The member for Port Adelaide laments the role of the Australian government; yet, on his own criteria—that is, on the evaluation framework that he put forward during his contribution—the Australian government is clearly outperforming any other government when it comes to support for government schools in this country. These facts are not ones that can be dismissed; they represent the reality, and they also illustrate the genuine commitment of the Howard government to public schools.

In the background, though, things are changing. Non-government school funding is rising because the student numbers are rising. If you look at the enrolment rates between 1996 and 2002, enrolments in non-government schools have increased by 13.3 per cent. Over the same time, enrolments in government schools have gone up 1.6 per cent. So something is going on. Funding is not being taken away from government schools. Funding is being allocated in greater amounts to government and non-government schools, but parents are making choices. I think the member for Port Adelaide touched on some of the reasons why that might be the case. But it would be wrong and entirely inappropriate to be critical or attack parents for making that choice, as the member for Port Adelaide seeks to do. They are making a judgment about what is in the best future interests of their children.

In this package, you are seeing some funding for capital works for non-government schools. Again, in contrasting the level of commitment that the member for Port Adelaide seeks to talk about, we can have a look at the situation in my own electorate. Since 2001, schools in the Dunkley electorate have attracted about $5.3 million worth of capital expenditure. That is not a bad effort. But you know me, Mr Deputy Speaker Lindsay—I would always like some more. I could give you a list of about 20 projects where funding would be extremely virtuous and welcome.

But, of that amount, let us just run through what has actually been spent. We have $2.4 million to build a new school—an excellent facility called Benton Junior College—in Mornington East; $650,000 for Langwarrin Park Primary School; $950,000 for the final two stages of the Kunyung Primary School redevelopment, which I was delighted to open on Friday; half a million dollars for Mt Eliza Primary School, and their work is proceeding very well; and $400,000 to complete the Mt Eliza Secondary College arts, technology and crafts facility. So that is the picture.

While that has been going on, there has been $170,000 provided to St Anthony’s Coptic Orthodox College—you might recognise that as a Christian Egyptian faith—which draws into my community students from right around the east and south-east of Melbourne. It is hardly a campus swimming in cash. It is hardly a case study of an upper elite swimming in pools and having all sorts of terribly luxurious things that the member for Port Adelaide would have you believe. They have actually redeveloped a disused primary school in Frankston North to cater for their students’ educational needs and to support their curriculum expanding to include a VCE program for students.

In Frankston North, a campus of Flinders Christian College opened last year and Brendan Nelson and I visited there. What a place of great vitality! They have had some assistance to open a second campus. The only criticism they would have is that, because it is the second campus of an existing school, they were not entitled to the establishment grant. You do not hear the Labor Party saying that that seems a little inequitable. When a new government school—that is, another campus of a government school—opens up,
they are ready for the cash. But here is a non-
government school that has simply opened
another campus, relying on and building
from the base it has established at another
already operational campus to open a new
facility in my electorate. With the help of
$300,000 from the federal government, I was
also delighted to support the Bayside Chris-
tian College arts facility, general learning
extension and library refurbishment last year.

So there has been some good education
activity and investment going on in the
community that I represent, but you could
hardly say that it has been skewed unre-
reasonably towards non-government schools. It
is quite the opposite. There is an appropriate
level of investment in government schools.
So, in this package, we are seeking to carry
forward that opportunity for capital grants. I
would just like to put on the record that John
Leaver, the executive officer of the block
grant authority in Victoria, is a remarkable
individual—he is doing a lot of good work
with the ecumenical school community. I
admire his commitment and passion and the
talent and experience that he brings to sup-
porting communities of the Christian faith in
developing their own non-government
schools. That is a great credit to him.

In the package, in addition to continuing
with the capital grants, there is funding for
literacy and numeracy programs. This matter
is terribly significant. It is a shame that some
of the speakers opposite have not touched
upon the importance of it. When you look at
the need for sound literacy and numeracy
skills and you have one moment to think
about it, it has to dawn on everybody that
they are the foundation capacities of all
young people moving forward with their
lives. If you are not competent in those areas,
how are you going to gain from further edu-
cation? In your secondary years, for instance,
or if you are a senior primary school student,
how are you going to canvass other training
opportunities if you are not able to partake in
reading safety instructions and if you are not
sufficiently numerate to be able to work in
the retail sector? These are basic building
blocks for future opportunities for people.

It is entirely appropriate that the govern-
ment seeks to continue that work. We are
now seeing a full cohort of assessment for
literacy and numeracy at years 3, 5 and 7.
The governments of Western Australia, the
Northern Territory and the ACT are support-
ing individual student reports in relation to a
child’s performance against national bench-
marks. We are told that the Victorian gov-
ernment is going to do likewise, but we will
wait and see, because they have not ordinar-
ily been that attracted to those kinds of ideas
which give parents an understanding of how
their student is travelling.

The national literacy and numeracy strate-
gies and projects that are being funded
through this allocation focus on research and
initiatives to support the National Literacy
and Numeracy Plan. There are other ele-
ments to the package, such as middle year
literacy and numeracy. That transition from
primary school to secondary school is diffi-
cult enough. But, if it is undermined by poor
numeracy and literacy skills, moving into a
new educational environment where you are
feeling that you are not able to cope can have
a devastating impact on a young person’s
educational opportunities.

There is also support for students with
disabilities and learning difficulties, and also
some work on Indigenous English literacy
and numeracy strategy. I would like to thank
Melody Rewakowski from my office for
pulling out some research on that. It shows
that, in terms of adequacy of numeracy
benchmarks for year 3 students in Australia,
about 92.7 per cent in the year 2000 were
meeting those year 3 benchmarks, but 73.7
per cent of Indigenous people were. So there
is a gap that needs to be addressed and there is funding being made available through this bill to support that.

In the time that is available to me, I would like to encourage those with a passion for education, as I have, and which has clearly been demonstrated by the member for Port Adelaide, by saying that, for things to change, we need to be open to them, rather than using dogma, putting up boundaries and ruling out of bounds ideas that might make a very beneficial contribution to our community. These things should be canvassed. Education is ripe for that. We have to work out how to attract the best teachers, how to retain them and how to do the very best for our kids. (Time expired)

Ms KING (Ballarat) (6.53 p.m.)—I rise to speak on the States Grants (Primary and Secondary Education Assistance) Amendment Bill 2003. This bill will maintain the 2003 funding level for capital grants to non-government schools for the next four years and will continue funding in 2004 for targeted programs for educationally disadvantaged students and for literacy and numeracy projects. Investment in education is the best way to address inequality in our society. Education is the greatest leveller when it comes to opportunity and is one of the key elements of our democratic tradition. We will have a debate about the government’s bias in providing substantial increases in funding to category 1 schools when the bill dealing with all Commonwealth programs for schools is introduced next year. It will be an important debate about the growing resources gap between high-fee paying schools and other government and non-government schools.

Whilst I support the extension of funding contained in this bill, I have some reservations about the government’s education policies and where they are taking us in relation to opportunities, particularly for those young people at the margins of our society, to participate in work and in a modern democracy. The debate in education has become somewhat skewed of late. Government policy has focused obsessively on the individual rights of those who can afford to choose between schools. This has been at the expense of a debate about the role of education in providing opportunity and in developing our democracy and developing the citizens who can play an active role in that democracy. In order to do that, you have to have an education policy that fosters and develops public education and which ensures that non-government schools that receive government funds utilise those funds to the best advantage of people on low incomes.

Unfortunately, that is not what this bill does. Whilst maintaining the capital works funding levels for non-government schools in 2004, the bill fails to ensure that the funding allocated in the bill is publicly reported; that a transparent process exists for the allocation of funds; that funds are allocated to non-government schools on the basis of educational and financial need; and, again, that they are publicly reported.

Our understanding of the link between capital investment in infrastructure and educational and other outcomes is growing. In a recent opinion piece in the journal Practising Administrator, it was claimed that researchers in the US found:

Students in a new facility scored significantly higher in reading, listening, language and maths than the students in an older building. The newer school also needed to use less discipline, had better attendance and students thought more positively of themselves.

The opinion piece also found:

Poor working environments were perceived as contributing to poor learning outcomes, reduced classroom effectiveness and lower morale and job satisfaction among teachers and administrators.
A recent PricewaterhouseCoopers report, commissioned by the New South Wales Department of Education and Skills, entitled Building better performance: an empirical assessment of learning and other impacts of school capital investment, had a more complex view. Whilst PricewaterhouseCoopers argued that the evidence in their study supported the link between improved learning outcomes and capital investment, there were several qualifications.

The first qualification was that different types of capital investment had an impact on results. According to the report, expenditure targeted at developing specialist areas for science, technology and ICT was generally considered by most head teachers to have the greatest positive impact on pupil attainment. In addition, replacing or modifying classrooms whose design inhibited desirable teaching methods was also reported to have a significant impact on the ability of pupils to learn. The second qualification in the report was the finding that head teachers in schools with either extremely low or extremely high levels of attainment reported a weaker link between capital and performance than those with average attainment. In schools with relatively poor attainment levels, head teachers struggled to see how capital investment on its own could help improve pupil performance. In schools with high attainment levels, head teachers could not always see the direct relevance of the capital-performance relationship. Both qualifications in the report point to the fact that the relationship between capital and educational outcomes is important but more complex than just providing blank cheques to schools regardless of what they are going to spend the money on and what their level of need is—and in the absence of other programs designed to assist the communities in which the schools with lower attainment levels operate.

This bill, in maintaining funding for capital works to non-government schools, is important in that it provides the opportunity for non-government schools to improve educational outcomes. However, the bill is unclear about the basis on which funds are to be allocated and, in the absence of any public reporting about what the funds are to be spent on, it is difficult to determine that. With finite government resources and with many schools across Australia experiencing declining capital stock, it is incumbent on the government to be transparent about what the policy objective of this program is. It should be about improving the learning outcomes for students. The government needs to be clear about the basis on which the funds in this bill are to be allocated, and the way they are spent should be reported.

Many schools across Australia, both government and non-government, have declining capital stock. In my electorate, I have been to a number of 125th anniversary celebrations of schools—and recently I went to the 150th anniversary celebration of one of my non-government schools. These anniversaries have highlighted not only the importance of these schools in their local communities but also the need for the upgrading of buildings and classrooms that were initially designed for meeting the learning needs of 19th century children. With the changing delivery of education, there are many schools in my electorate that clearly need a capital upgrade and clearly need to focus those capital upgrades on areas where there are going to be learning outcome improvements. They include government schools such as Darley Primary School and non-government schools such as St Alpius. Both of these are projects in need, and there are of course many others.

Australia currently ranks 19th out of 30 OECD countries for upper secondary school completion. Australia also has one of the highest proportions of 15- to 19-year-olds...
who are not in education or work, ranking us in the bottom half of the OECD. In my own region, estimates place the number of 15- to 19-year-olds who are out of work and not engaged in school or other education or training at around 23 per cent. We have an enormous responsibility to these children to ensure that they are able to meet the challenges of the 21st century and are able to move on to tertiary education, New Apprenticeships or employment.

Investment in education is fundamental to ensuring that these young people have the foundations and the ability to seize opportunities in the future. VET in Schools has been an important step in assisting young people, but many schools are finding the capital investment required to expand VET in Schools is well beyond their reach. This is one of the reasons it is disappointing that this bill is focused solely on capital investment for non-government schools, while not focusing on those areas of capital investment in non-government schools that might actually improve learning outcomes. Whilst it is important to invest in education, there must be greater transparency. I want to know that the money is going to schools on the basis of need—not going to build a new hockey pitch at an already well-resourced school but genuinely helping to improve learning outcomes for students in non-government schools. There must be some accountability, with an easily accessible record of which school received which money for which project. There used to be in existence a large book that documented where funds went in relation to capital grants to non-government schools. This sort of accountability has disappeared under the Howard government.

The government, despite all the spin, has in my view a bias towards resourcing private schools. The government does seem to want to focus the debate on a two-tiered system around choice—the choice between government and non-government schools. Perhaps it is not surprising to note that only 20 per cent of government ministers attended government schools and a substantial number attended some of the wealthiest schools in this country. On our side, over 50 per cent of the shadow ministry attended government schools, and if you add Catholic parish schools, such as the one I attended, it rises to well over 60 per cent. I am certainly not saying that by attending wealthy private schools ministers had a better education; in fact, I think that is questionable in the case of some ministers. I am saying that their very experiences mean that they have little regard for, or understanding of, or interest in, the needs of government or Catholic parish schools. They are often so keen to support their own alma maters—by ensuring an allocation of a greater proportion of funding dollars to schools with excellent facilities and resources—that there is often little left to assist government schools, Catholic parish schools and other non-government schools in need.

This bill also focuses on the issue of numeracy and literacy. An increasing level of numeracy and literacy skills is required to function in our society. It is pleasing to see that the government recognises this by providing in this bill additional funds for national initiatives in 2003 and 2004. One could view this increase with a degree of cynicism, though, when realising that it will only restore funding to the levels of 2002. As with the capital grants to non-government schools, there needs to be more accountability about the expenditure of literacy and numeracy grants. Guidelines need to be tightened, requiring evidence of improved learning outcomes for students from schools receiving funding. Funding of conferences, publications and small research projects is all very well, but only where it can be demonstrated that literacy and numeracy skills have
actually improved because of the expenditure.

Research has shown that there have been some improvements against the national reading benchmarks for students in years 3 and 5 in 2000. The performance of Indigenous students, however, is particularly concerning, with research showing results below the national benchmark. Indigenous students, as well as boys, students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, students from rural areas and students with backgrounds in languages other than English also record poorer results in relation to reading literacy. These are the areas that need to be targeted specifically, where there is funding available for numeracy and literacy programs.

I am proud of the achievements of the students and teachers of Darley Primary School in my electorate, who won a 2003 achievement award in the National Numeracy and Literacy Week. The award demonstrated the commitment of the teachers of Darley Primary School to improve the literacy and numeracy of their students in preparing them for their future lives. The teachers have achieved some fantastic outcomes in a poorly resourced school with outdated buildings—in fact, over 90 per cent of the buildings at the school are still portables—and poor infrastructure. One can only imagine what achievements might have been possible if the school had been better resourced.

Finally, while supporting this bill, I want to reiterate that education is a fundamental equaliser. It is fundamental to achieving a fairer and more equitable society. The federal government does not have responsibility only for non-government schools, as many of the speakers on the government side of the House would have us believe; it has responsibility for all schools, whether they are government or non-government schools. More importantly, it has responsibility for all students, and that means it has to look very seriously at where it spends scarce resources—for the benefit of all students and particularly for the benefit of those who are least advantaged by wealth.

Mr HUNT (Flinders) (7.05 p.m.)—In rising to address the States Grants (Primary and Secondary Education Assistance) Amendment Bill 2003, I want to start by concentrating on three different schools within my electorate of Flinders. The first is Westpark Primary in Hastings. Westpark Primary, under the principalship of Brian Forward, backed up by a magnificent staff, is in an area which, by all indicators, has significant disadvantages. The school has challenges for students and challenges for parents. It has one of the highest levels of single parenting in the state. Yet, despite those disadvantages, I am very proud to be able to say that, through an education innovation grant provided by the Commonwealth, they have been able to prepare a literacy program—which initially started with grade 6 students but is now working with prep students and grade 1 students—developing a concept, a base and an ability in literacy. Working with Monash University, this program has brought the school community together to focus on the very basics—the absolute building blocks for knowledge, learning and self-confidence, which will see the little prep students and the little grade 1 students right through their educational career into adulthood.

This program is an example of the sorts of things that I believe we should be doing throughout the electorate of Flinders and throughout Australia. It has a targeted focus on literacy and the very basic building blocks. Even though they are a responsibility of the states, I do not shy away from the fact that we set out consciously to deal with literacy issues. Those broader questions are raised and addressed directly in this particular bill.
The second school that I want to focus on is Cranbourne Christian College. Cranbourne Christian College, unlike Westpark Primary, is not a primary school: it runs from prep right through to year 12. It is a private, low-fee Christian school. It was established just over a decade ago by a group of far-sighted and forward-thinking people who had a commitment to private Christian education in a low-income area. It is in a low-income area and it is for low-income families.

Along the way the school has received a succession of Commonwealth grants. I was fortunate to attend the recent opening of the school’s newest facility: a new arts facility, largely provided by Commonwealth funding, but with a significant contribution from the school community. I was able to see a school which would not have existed but for Commonwealth contributions. I saw the work of the school community in creating a magnificent learning environment.

Both Westpark in Hastings and Cranbourne Christian College are full of committed teachers. Each of them has worked, on the basis of funding contributed by the Commonwealth, to try to expand the literacy and general opportunities available in order to give their children a chance of a real future where they would have the basic skills, a basic understanding of society and the knowledge and opportunity to live rich and fulfilling lives. Those schools have benefited from the two core elements of this bill: literacy funding and capital funding. Those are the essential elements of this bill.

The third school I want to mention is Somerville Secondary College. Somerville Secondary College has not come into being yet, but it will. It will come into being as a result of a concerted campaign by the Somerville community. This large town had no secondary college. It had a significant education gap, and it had social problems as a result of that. As a consequence of a focused, directed and absolutely unyielding campaign by local residents, parents and students, we were successful in winning the battle for a secondary college.

That college will come into being in 2005. I am delighted that it will come into being. It will come into being with a mixture of state and Commonwealth funding. We are pushing to ensure that if the Commonwealth provides funding—and I hope that it will provide some millions of dollars—that will not be used to decrease the state proportion of funding. If that happens, two of the core projects within the school—creating the playing fields and the arts and drama centre—may not be able to go ahead. I believe that we will be successful in receiving Commonwealth funding. We have made the case and the funding is likely to be the outcome. However, I hope that that will not lead to a consequent decrease in state funding. Indeed, I have been working with my colleague in the state parliament, who is from the other side of the political divide, because we both believe that it would be a tragedy if the Commonwealth provided funding and the state consequently decreased its own funding. We want to see a fully resourced school in its educational and extracurricular facilities. That proposal is on the table and we believe we should be able to achieve it.

In looking at the bill, I want to address its two core elements—firstly, the notion of capital funding and, secondly, the notion of support for literacy. In looking at capital funding, we find that it builds on a pattern and a process of increased government funding over the last seven years. The government’s current budget allocates a record $6.9 billion to Australian schools and students for 2003. That is an increase of approximately $528 million or 8.3 per cent over the last year. That is significantly and dramatically higher than the rate of inflation. So there
have been real increases over the last few years.

In addition, since 1996 the total Commonwealth funding for schools and students has grown by more than 93 per cent. Again, that is well in excess of the rate of inflation and well in excess of the rate at which state funding has grown. In that situation, we can see that, over the 2001 to 2004 funding quadrennium, schools will receive over $1.3 billion in Commonwealth funding under the capital grants program. Of this funding, approximately $950 million will go to government schools—72 per cent of funding to a sector with 68 per cent of enrolments—which does redress some of the claims made by critics of the program. In addition, approximately $373 million will go to non-government schools.

It is interesting to understand the philosophy behind this program. Funding is given to non-government schools for two reasons: firstly, many of the students at non-government schools have a much lower socioeconomic background than many of the students at government schools; and, secondly, across the board, for each student in a non-government school the net cost to government of having them there is far less than the net cost were they all to transfer back to government schools. That means more money for each student in government schools. That is a very important notion. Every student whose parent chooses to make a contribution is actually saving the government money, so it can put more into government schools. In a sense that may be counter-intuitive, but it is empirically and demonstrably the case.

In that context, the capital allocations made under this bill are critical, because they allow us to go forward. It means that if money is available for schools like Bayview Christian College, Flinders Christian College, Hillcrest Christian College and Cranbourne Christian College, at the same time, through other provisions, there will also be significant amounts of funding for Somerville Secondary College and for capital works such as those at the Rye Primary School and also the Dromana Secondary College, which has just received a significant additional grant, bringing to almost $2 million the amount of Commonwealth funding that the Dromana Secondary College, under the admiral principalship of David Barclay, has received over the last couple of years.

The second great item in this bill is a simple one: funding to assist with literacy and numeracy. We are all in agreement that literacy and numeracy are the most important foundation skills our children need during their education. When we look at the joint program at Westpark Primary School and Hastings Primary School we see the impact on children of dedicated, focused literacy education. That program has a real impact. The money which is made available in this bill to assist with literacy and numeracy plays a very important role. By supporting the improved literacy and numeracy program for all Australian students, we are providing a foundation. But there are significant steps still to be taken. As a country we are not as far forward as we should be on this issue. There have been gaps. At times there have been education fads which have taken the focus away from the bases of literacy and numeracy.

I am an unashamed, unequivocal supporter of literacy and numeracy programs as the absolute sine qua non—the absolute base—of all education in our primary schools. Where there is an attempt to divert from literacy and numeracy because in some way they are seen as unfashionable, old hat, conservative or traditional I will oppose any move away from literacy and numeracy. They are the basis upon which all our pri-
primary and secondary education should be founded. This bill adds to those bases. I am delighted to commend to the House the States Grants (Primary and Secondary Education Assistance) Amendment Bill 2003. Above all else, I commend to the House the two notions within it: firstly, capital funding for contributing to and building upon education resources; and, secondly, the focus on literacy and numeracy.

Mr ZAHRA (McMillan) (7.17 p.m.)—I rise to speak on the States Grants (Primary and Secondary Education Assistance) Amendment Bill 2003. We in the electorate of McMillan are fortunate to have some outstanding non-government and government schools in both the primary and secondary sectors. I want to mention an important point: the need to have some flexibility in what you do with school funding when there are particular issues. Some members in the chamber today are Victorians. They would recognise that in country districts in particular it is possible to have student outcomes which are vastly different from the general trend. All of Victoria might be heading in one direction but it is possible to have a region, be it an outer metropolitan region or a country district, which is heading in another direction. It is important to have flexibility in how we fund schools and in what money is generally available to meet the different needs that sometimes exist in country districts or outer suburban areas.

It is well known that the Gippsland region was hit hard during the early part of the 1990s. Probably until a couple of years ago you would have said that we were identified as one of the most disadvantaged regions in the country. One of the ways in which that manifested itself was a fall-off in retention rates to year 12 and marks which were not as high as we would have liked to have seen. In recognition of this, the Victorian state government took the bold decision to intervene in the circumstances and to fund an initiative which has come to be known as the Gippsland Education Precinct. That initiative brings together under one banner a number of public secondary colleges in the Latrobe Valley, the local group training provider, Gippsland Group Training Ltd, which is one of the best group training providers in the country, and what has come to be known as GippsTAFE—what we have always known as the Central Gippsland Institute of TAFE—to be located at a shared campus at the site of Monash University’s campus at Churchill. It brought together all those disparate elements of higher education and it was seen as an idea which had the great potential to break the pattern that we in the Gippsland region were in—that is, marks that were not as high as they should have been and, sadly for us, falling retention rates at year 12.

I am pleased to report that there has been steady progress, in particular around the organisation and work which have been needed to be done to get the initiative in place. We are well advanced. A new campus principal has been appointed for what is going to be called the education precinct campus. Kurnai College has agreed to put its year 11 and 12 campus wholly out at Churchill, which is a courageous decision on behalf of that school. The other secondary colleges, Traralgon and Lowanna, will be participating in the education precinct using audiovisual and Internet connections as part of what is known as the ICT hub, which is administered from the campus to those remote locations where people will be able to benefit from the initiatives offered by the education precinct project.

A lot of good work is being done. It is important that we in this place recognise the hard work of Central Gippsland Institute of TAFE under the leadership of Jeff Gunningham, Gippsland Group Training under the leadership of Kevin Kennedy its CEO, and
Kurnai College under the leadership of Margaret Corcoran. They have worked with Professor Brian McKenzie, the Pro Vice Chancellor of Monash University, Gippsland, in getting together this incredible initiative and getting us to the point now where we are very close to taking our first enrolment of students at that campus.

You need some flexibility in meeting the circumstances. To their credit, the state government have done the right thing in supporting this initiative at a cost of some $15 million. Through the Australian National Training Authority, $1 million of federal government money has also gone into the project. We are talking about having the flexibility to respond to these circumstances to make sure people do not fall behind or get left behind in education more generally.

In my electoral district we are very fortunate to have an unusual high school program offered at Trafalgar High School. It is a program I have had cause to be involved in quite a bit over the years. It is the accelerated learning program run at Trafalgar High School. It is not that big a school—there are probably 500-odd kids—but it runs the program which it administers for the entire subregion of the Latrobe Valley. There are about 120 kids who participate in that program. All the people of the Latrobe Valley get to benefit from having that program because of the leadership of Trafalgar High School in providing that program and offering it to people right across the Latrobe Valley.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER—I thank the member for McMillan and I thank him for recognising the standing orders.

Mr ZAHRA—Trafalgar High School’s program is an important program to talk about because it points to the incredible diversity that we have in schools within the public system and also within the non-government system. Trafalgar High School is an excellent school. It operates in a small town. Trafalgar is not a big town; there are about 3,500 people there. It is a great little community and there are a lot of very good people there. But if we were just talking about meeting the needs of the people of Trafalgar you would never be able to run an accelerated learning program. There are some 120 kids who participate in that program. All the people of the Latrobe Valley get to benefit from having that program because of the leadership of Trafalgar High School in providing that program and offering it to people right across the Latrobe Valley.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER—That might be enough on the Trafalgar High School accelerated learning program. Could we move on?

Mr ZAHRA—It is an excellent program.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER—I said that would be enough.

Mr ZAHRA—It is an excellent program. While we are talking about schools more generally, I had cause the other day to visit the Poowong and district primary school, which is, not surprisingly, in Poowong in the southern part of my electoral district. I participated in a mock parliament, which was organised by the teaching staff and students at Poowong and district primary school. I have been to a lot of schools, as I am sure you, Mr Deputy Speaker, and other members of this place have too. I have never seen a place so well set up as this school classroom was for grades 4 and 5. The grade 6 kids
came and joined us as well. I am sure the clerks would be interested to know they had a place for the clerks set up in their classroom and they had gone to a lot of trouble to even have the people who record the proceedings identified as well. They did a very good job.

We are very fortunate to have at the schools the staff that we do. They are creative and are prepared to put in the hard work and go that extra mile in doing the research that is involved in making something that might be not that special into something that is special. We are fortunate to have the teachers that we have in the schools in our state system and also in the non-government system. The teachers at Poowong and district primary school obviously take a great deal of pride in their commitment to their students. People in country districts are often very fortunate indeed to have such committed and professional staff, who are working in very difficult circumstances where people have to travel large distances to get to school. Often country schools are not as well resourced as they should be.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER—It would assist the chair if the member for McMillan could refer to the bill from time to time.

Mr ZAHRA—I am happy to refer to the bill. Far be it from me to make any reference to the importance of the chair in being fair in how he enforces the standing orders but—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER—if the member for McMillan does not return to the bill I will sit him down. I have given him ample opportunity to return to the bill. I ask him to assist the chair.

Mr ZAHRA—The bill is about a couple of very basic things. It is about literacy and numeracy and it is about making sure there is funding for schools. I do not see how it could be more relevant. I will come back to the point that I made before: if I am not in order then the member for Flinders was not in order. If we are going to have a fair dinkum debate, let us have a fair dinkum debate about an important issue in our community. People are concerned about whether or not there are programs available to them in their community like the Trafalgar High School’s accelerated learning program. They are concerned about the state of funding that exists for small schools in struggling areas like Poowong.

These are all things which have to be talked about in a debate about schools in the secondary and primary systems. If we cannot talk about this maybe we should not have a debate. These are things that matter to people who live in electorates like mine and in the electorate of the member for Corio, who is here beside me, and to just about everyone else in here. If we are going to have a fair dinkum debate we have to be able to talk about these things.

I picked up a point that was made earlier by someone in relation to flexibility and making sure that we had a creative response to different types of educational situations. Literacy is one of these things too. Literacy is one of those things where you have to have programs in place to make sure that people do not get left behind and do not get left out of the educational opportunities which are available to people in schools. One of things I want to take the opportunity to mention is how proud I was that, in the electorate of McMillan, there were two schools which received National Literacy and Numeracy Week awards this year. Both of these schools were in the Latrobe Valley—Grey Street Primary School in my beloved old home town of Traralgon and also Saint Keiran’s School in beautiful Moe, the town I have my electorate office in.

Mr Gavan O’Connor—A beautiful place; I’ve been there many times.
Mr ZAHRA—The member for Corio is telling me that he has been there many times. He has been, over the years, and he knows just how wonderful a place the Latrobe Valley is. We are fortunate to have in the Latrobe Valley, in the electorate of McMillan, two high-performing schools which have both won National Literacy and Numeracy Week awards. I make the point—and not many people know this—that only 50 of those awards get given out every year. There are 150 members of the House of Representatives, so you would reasonably think that one in three members might be lucky enough to have one of these awards given out in their electoral district. So imagine how fortunate we are, in the electorate of McMillan, in the Latrobe Valley, to have got not one but two. Saint Keiran’s in Moe and Grey Street Primary School in Traralgon have really done us proud. They have been great achievers and great contributors to education in the Latrobe Valley region.

On Thursday night I was invited to attend and took great pleasure in attending the Drouin Secondary College annual presentation night. It was a great event. Drouin Secondary College really is a remarkable school, an excellent school. It is very fortunate to have outstanding leadership. The principal, Rod Dunlop, is a good man and a fine leader and he is very ably supported by two assistant principals. But I particularly want to mention the important role that Lois Juratowitch has played at that school for more than 20 years. Excellent leadership at Drouin Secondary College is producing some outstanding results and is producing some students who are very community minded and who have a real commitment not just to themselves but to their community as well. It was an excellent occasion.

One of the things that people who get cynical about life and who get worried about our young people need to do from time to time is to go to a year 12 presentation night, because it really is an inspiring thing to see how many outstanding young people are being produced from schools like Drouin Secondary College—people who are well equipped to take on the challenges that the world has for them and well equipped to deal with more than just matters to do with work but also matters to do with their community involvement over the years ahead and also to deal with some of the other challenges that come up in life. Drouin Secondary College is a remarkable school and very ably led. It was a very positive occasion and a great celebration of a lot that is good about Drouin Secondary College.

I have a number of very small schools in my electoral district. One of the schools which I want to take the opportunity tonight to mention is Noojee Primary School. Noojee Primary School is a beautiful little school. It is probably one of the most remote schools in the electoral district of McMillan. It has 24 students this year. The school is nestled on the south side of Mount Baw Baw. It really is an incredible school community. I remember speaking to the principal, Ron Gillchrist, shortly after he had taken on his posting there. He was talking to me about how he had organised his first school working bee. He had 24 kids at the school, and at his first school working bee 24 sets of parents came out. That is not a bad percentage, you would have to agree. It is hard to beat 100 per cent. That is the sort of place Noojee is.

Noojee Primary School is a special place. Recently, with the community I celebrated an important milestone for the school—it had been in that community, serving that district, for quite some time. It was incredible to see how far people had come to celebrate Noojee Primary School’s proud achievements. People had come from Western Australia and from Queensland. People who had grown up
in the tiny village of Noojee and were living in Melbourne had made the trek all the way back down the Princes Highway, north of Warragul, to Noojee to participate in this occasion.

This is the importance of schools. They are something that people remember forever and they play an incredibly important role in people’s formative experiences and often in their outlook on life as well. It was fortunate for us that in our district we have had such a large number of excellent schools which have been doing incredible things in our district and really adding a lot to the quality of life that we have in our region. We have schools which are responding to the contemporary challenges in education, such as people dealing with issues of disadvantage. We have some schools in our district which have a very high proportion of students who are from families in receipt of education maintenance allowance, which as most people—at least the Victorians—would be aware means that in large part they are from families who are in receipt of welfare benefits. We have a number of schools which are coping with difficult issues of isolation. We have a number of schools which are coping with substantial changes to the region in which they have always operated. I speak particularly of those schools in the Pakenham region, where there has been an explosion of enrolments over the last five or six years. There have been massive enrolments as a large number of people have moved into the area. Schools of course need to keep up with the demand to be able to meet the needs of communities and parents.

We are fortunate, in the electorate of McMillan, to have so many outstanding schools, so many excellent educational leaders and so many teachers and parents prepared to do the hard work that is required to make a school a success. We are fortunate, and I want to place on the record my admiration for all those people who have been involved for so many years in working hard to make our schools as good as they are. *(Time expired)*

Mr PEARCE (Aston) *(7.37 p.m.)*—We have just heard 20 minutes of the member for McMillan doing what he should have done on the adjournment debate. He has obviously forgotten about that. The bill before the House is the States Grants (Primary and Secondary Education Assistance) Amendment Bill 2003. I do understand why the member for McMillan would not want to talk about this bill: this is a good news bill. This is more money to Australian schools, so, naturally, he would not want to talk about the bill. Rather, he has taken 20 minutes of the chamber’s time doing something that he could have done in about a quarter of that time in the adjournment debate later on this evening.

The Howard government has a strong and continuing track record of significant investment, both financial and intellectual, in the delivery of better educational opportunities and outcomes for all Australian students. This bill, the States Grants (Primary and Secondary Education Assistance) Amendment Bill 2003, implements important initiatives from this year’s budget which add to that proud record of achievement. The bill also demonstrates the government’s dedication to the task of continuing to build on what has been achieved and to make further improvements to our nation’s education system.

One of the major achievements to date which it is continuing to build on is the government’s delivery of improving resources for all schools, government and non-government. All schools get more money from this government. In every budget and in grants to every state and territory for every year since 1996, funding for schooling has
increased. In recent budgets the rate of federal funding for public schooling has risen more rapidly than state and territory funding. This year’s budget allocated a record $6.9 billion to Australian schools and students, which represents an 8.3 per cent increase on last year. That equates to over half a billion dollars more investment in Australian schooling and adds to this government’s strong track record on schools. That record is best demonstrated by the fact that, since 1996, Commonwealth funding for schools and students has grown by more than 93 per cent. Also consider that, over the next four years to 2006-07, Commonwealth funding for Australian schools will total over $30 billion.

As I mentioned earlier, that record stands in stark contrast to the states and territories, particularly in my home state of Victoria. The people of Aston have begun to see firsthand the broken promises and empty rhetoric of the Bracks government, which have been exposed by their betrayal on things like the Scoresby Freeway. Education funding provides another pointer to the fact that, as the Commonwealth Treasurer points out, one should not listen to what Labor say but rather look at what they do for a true indication of reality.

The states and territories have the temerity to claim that the Australian government is not supporting their efforts and investment in government schools. This is plainly untrue. This government has provided more federal funding directly into government schools and has provided the states and territories with improved tax arrangements, particularly in terms of revenue growth. Despite the states and territories having constitutional and primary responsibility for funding government schools, this government—the federal government—has increased funding to these schools by almost 60 per cent since 1996. In that time, enrolments in government schools nationally have increased by only 1.6 per cent.

The Commonwealth’s tax reform process has provided the states and territories with a growth in revenues tax from the GST, which is aimed at helping them meet their funding responsibilities. In Victoria, for example, the GST will deliver $6.4 billion in revenue in this year alone. Yet despite this, and despite their claimed focus on education, the Bracks government has failed government school students and their parents not just in my electorate but across the whole of Victoria.

In this year’s Victorian budget, the Bracks government increased funding to government schools by only 2.3 per cent. That is a net decrease in real terms. That stands in stark contrast to the Australian government, which increased funding to Victorian government schools by 6.1 percent. So you have to ask the question: what does that mean in practical terms? It means that, by failing to match the Commonwealth’s funding increase, Victorian government schools like Kent Park Primary School in Knoxfield and, most importantly, their students are being short-changed by the Bracks government to the tune of $179 million. So, as you can see, while Labor may claim to care about the education of our children, the reality of their actions is very different.

This year’s budget continued the government’s commitment to the capital grants program, which supports local non-government schools like those in my electorate. Capital grants assist schools with the provision and upgrading of important school infrastructure. This infrastructure includes such things as land, buildings, water and electricity, equipment, library materials and cataloguing services, and furniture. In fact, since I became the member for Aston in 2001, the capital grants program has had a real impact on local schools and school communities in my
 electorate. Capital grants have benefited both non-government and government schools. For example, grants have included over $700,000 to St Simons Primary School, over $200,000 to the Waverley Christian College in Wantirna and over $450,000 to Heathmont College in Heathmont for the upgrading of existing facilities.

This bill implements the government’s commitment of a further $48.2 million for the non-government schools program over the four years from 2004 through to 2007. This will mean that Commonwealth funding for the non-government capital program is maintained in real terms. This is important, because without this appropriation the level of capital funding for non-government schools from 2004 to 2007 will actually fall by more than $11.7 million each year below the current level. This would adversely affect schools serving the most educationally dis-advantaged students.

As I mentioned, this funding is part of the government’s ongoing commitment to help provide the infrastructure that is needed to create the best learning environment for all of our children. Over the four years from 2001 to 2004, Australian schools will receive over $1.3 billion in Commonwealth funding under the capital grants program alone. Of this funding, almost $950 million will go to government schools and over $373 million to non-government schools. Looking ahead, from 2004 to 2007 government schools will receive capital grants funding of over $222 million each year and non-government schools will receive over $87 million each year. This is a significant investment and will be supplemented in line with movements in non-residential building costs as measured by the ABS.

Commonwealth funding for all schools is focused on achieving agreed national standards, particularly for literacy and numeracy, to which a further $210 million was committed in this year’s budget. Literacy and numeracy are important foundation skills our children need during their education. The government values the development of proficiency in these skills because they help young people to better reach their potential and, of course, to take advantage of education, training and employment opportunities throughout their entire lives. The government remains committed to continuing its efforts to improve literacy and numeracy outcomes for Australian students by providing support for the implementation of the National Literacy and Numeracy Plan. The plan is aimed at achieving the national goal, which is that all students should have attained the skills of numeracy and English literacy such that every student is numerate and able to read, write, spell and communicate at an appropriate level. I am pleased to say that schools in my electorate are helping to lead the way in delivering on these objectives. These schools include Holy Trinity Primary School in Wantirna South, which was recognised with an achievement award as part of the government’s National Literacy and Numeracy Week celebrations.

The bill provides additional funding under the Strategic Assistance for Improving Student Outcomes program of over $33 million for 2004 alone. This funding is used by the states and territories to support critically important and sensitive programs in schools for those students requiring additional assistance. The bill also provides additional funding under the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies and Projects program of over $10.8 million for this year and next. This funding is used to support the development of national standards and comparable national reporting, including reporting against performance measures. The continuation of these two funding streams will support improved learning outcomes for educa-
tionally disadvantaged students, particularly in the key areas of literacy and numeracy. The funding will also support strategic literacy and numeracy research and development.

The government’s significant investment in literacy and numeracy has indeed already delivered very good progress. According to results from the OECD Program for International Student Assessment, only one country performed better than Australia in reading literacy and only two countries performed better in mathematical and scientific literacy. As a result of this government’s leadership, Australia now has its first national reporting and assessment of literacy and numeracy standards, which are currently at years 3, 5 and 7. The government has also helped to secure greater reporting to parents of their child’s skills in literacy and numeracy.

The education measures in this year’s budget, including those implemented through this bill, strengthen the government’s leadership role in demanding the best for all of our students. That role is multifaceted. It is about providing the necessary resources to help deliver a better learning environment for all of our students. It is also about making that investment work smarter by putting the right frameworks in place, like the National Literacy and Numeracy Plan, to ensure we achieve the outcomes that are best and that we indeed expect for all of our children. This bill is an important part of that ongoing effort, and I therefore commend it to the House.

Ms HOARE (Charlton) (7.49 p.m.)—I rise tonight to speak on the States Grants (Primary and Secondary Education Assistance) Amendment Bill 2003. The purpose of this legislation is to provide funding for capital grants to non-government schools to maintain the 2003 funding level for the next four years, and to continue funding in 2004 for targeted programs for educationally disadvantaged students and for literacy and numeracy projects. The bill provides funding of $41.8 million over four years, from 2004 to 2007, for approved projects in non-government schools. The effect of the bill is to maintain the 2003 funding level for the years from 2004 to 2007. Funding for non-government schools’ capital grants in 2003 is $87.4 million. The current legislated allocation for 2004 and beyond is $76.94 million, a reduction of $41.84 million over four years. This reduction results from the termination of a previous government commitment.

The government is now proposing to extend that commitment for the period 2004-07. This would enable the capital grants program to be offered to approved projects under advanced approval arrangements, which have been in place for many years to enable schools to plan their capital projects prior to receiving public funds. But, as the shadow minister has outlined, the legislation raises a number of important issues. This bill does nothing about capital needs in government schools. On a recent visit to Edgeworth Public School in my electorate of Charlton, I was told how badly they needed a school hall. This bill does nothing to address that need. While I was a guest at West Wallsend High School, it was made clear to me that there are senior school students studying for their higher school certificate who have to share textbooks because there are not enough to go around. This is a disgrace, and there is nothing in this bill to address such an appalling state of affairs. Yet expenditure from all sources in non-government schools of $1,073 per student is well above the $355 per public school student.

The current arrangements do not adequately protect the public interest in the wealth created by Commonwealth funding for capital investment for churches and private organisations. Accountability in public
reporting about the allocation of capital funds, particularly against needs criteria, is unclear and lacks transparency. The additional funding provided for high-fee schools under the government’s general recurrent program could lead to increased capital investment in those schools, increasing the resources gap between them and other government and non-government schools.

The bill also provides for an additional $10.87 million in 2003-04 for national initiatives in literacy, which restores funding to the 2002 levels. This is of course welcome. However, the existing guidelines for national projects in literacy and numeracy are loose. Funding is used to promote conferences and publications, as well as a range of small research projects. These guidelines must be reformed and tightened and they must show evidence of improved learning outcomes for students in accountability for these projects. In one-third of OECD countries, including Australia, between 67 and 79 per cent of 15-year-old students are proficient at least at level 3 on the reading literacy scale. Although in Australia there are many students whose literacy is at the highest level on the scale, over 10 per cent of Australian students still have a literacy level at or below level 1. The government must address this serious issue. It should be addressed in this legislation.

We welcome the additional funding of $33.79 million for grants for Strategic Assistance for Improving Student Outcomes. This program is for schools and students in disadvantaged areas and for students with disabilities. Remembering the disproportionate funding from this bill that is being poured into private schools, it is very important to note that nearly 88 per cent of Indigenous students attend public schools. Some 4.5 per cent of students in public schools are Indigenous, compared to the 1.4 per cent who attend private schools. Around 82 per cent of students with disabilities attend a public school. Two per cent of private school students have a disability and over four per cent of students in public schools live with a disability. Of students attending public schools, 3.2 per cent live in remote areas, whereas the number attending private schools is 1.2 per cent.

It seems that once again we are having the state aid debate. In 1973 the Whitlam government established a system for funding non-government schools based on relative needs. The Education Resources Index operated successfully over the next quarter of a century, with various modifications. In 2000 the state grants bill changed the way the Commonwealth provided funding to schools. Those changes allowed the 62 category 1 schools around Australia to share up to $50 million per year in extra Commonwealth funding. That new scheme proposed the use of a socioeconomic status model and based federal funding for private schools on an estimate of the wealth of the parents of the students. This was based on the average income not of the parents of the students attending those schools but of the region in which they lived. Absolutely no account was taken of the individual wealth of the parents or the schools or any private support received. Of course, many kids attending the King’s School come from rural New South Wales, where the average incomes are generally low.

A good example of how inequitable and plainly unfair this model is can be illustrated by Victorian media reports of the fact that in 2001 when the system was introduced the Worowa Aboriginal College in Healesville received an additional $23 per student, whereas Wesley College in Prahran in Melbourne was granted an extra $249 per student. Geelong Grammar was granted $402 and Haileybury College received an additional $452 per student. This comparison
gets worse when we put it beside most non-government schools in Melbourne’s western suburbs and country Victoria, and most of the state’s Jewish schools, which received no additional funding at all. Queensland’s Courier-Mail recorded in June that the state’s eight grammar schools, which charge up to $10,000 a year in fees, collected more than $25.8 million in public money last year. It further reported the elite Brisbane Grammar School received $2.4 million from the federal government, which will increase to $3.2 million by 2004.

At their meeting in July this year, all state and territory education ministers demanded that the Howard government scrap the socio-economic status funding index, which they said was delivering massive increases to the wealthiest private schools at the expense of many public schools. Commonwealth funding to private schools increased by an average of $996 per student from 1999 to 2003. That was more than seven times the increase to government schools. By 2007 government schools will be getting $828 per student and private schools will be getting $4,531. This is yet another reason for the Australian people to toss out this government for the rich and replace it with a Labor government, who will govern for all.

Figures indicate that, since the budget for 1995-96, Commonwealth specific purpose payments for schools have increased. However, this increase has been greatest for non-government schools, with an increase of 134.6 per cent, compared to a 66.7 per cent increase for government schools. The current budget papers show total Commonwealth expenditure by function and sub-function and indicate that by 2006-07 total Commonwealth funding for non-government schools will reach $5,425 million, compared to $2,647 million for government schools. Government schools will get less than half the money. In percentage terms, by 2006-07 non-government schools will be receiving 67.2 per cent of all Commonwealth funding for schools. We should also remember that from this financial year the federal government’s funding for non-government schools will surpass its total expenditure on higher education. And this is a government that denies that there is a crisis in Australia’s education system.

Forward estimates indicate that by 2006-07 the Howard government will spend nearly $5.5 billion on private schools, $5.3 billion on universities and only $2.6 billion on public schools. I would like to note that the proportion of Commonwealth specific purpose payments for schools in 1995-96 was 55.6 per cent for non-government schools and 40.4 per cent for government schools. That has changed dramatically with this government’s policies. Now, in 2003, 66 per cent of specific purpose payments are directed at the non-government sector. Public schools get a paltry 34 per cent of that funding.

I would like to take a moment to showcase a couple of public schools in my electorate of Charlton. Over the past month I have had the privilege of attending the 50th birthdays of two local primary schools: Argenton Public School and Blackalls Park Public School. I attended Blackalls Park’s on Saturday. Both of these schools, along with all other schools in my electorate, have a fine tradition of delivering good education and good values to the children in my electorate. I congratulate both Blackalls Park Public School and Argenton Public School on achieving this magnificent milestone. I congratulate all the teachers, students, support staff and the whole communities of those schools on achieving this great milestone and I wish them all the very best for the next 50 years. I am looking forward to supporting those schools and all other schools in my electorate over the coming years.
Another school in my electorate, Speers Point Public School, topped the nation this year in receiving an award in the 2003 National Awards for Quality Schooling. Speers Point School was selected to win a prize of $24,000 for outstanding achievement in the area of safe school environments. Apparently the quality of applications received for the awards was of an exceptionally high standard, so I was able to commend Speers Point Public School for its considerable achievement. I think its prize was one of only 16 prizes awarded for outstanding achievement right across the nation. It is great and deserving as well that it went to a public school in my electorate. I had the opportunity to host the principal of Speers Point Public School when school members came here in the last parliamentary sitting to receive their prize. They were justifiably proud, as were the other teachers, staff, students and members of the whole school community that worked together on this project. Once again I congratulate them on it.

We on the Labor side of parliament will support this bill, but we have moved amendments relating to the capital funding of non-government schools. These concern the explicit provision within the act that eligibility for capital grants requires schools to demonstrate education and financial need and that evidence for this be made publicly available through appropriate accountability arrangements. Labor’s amendments also seek to address provision for the tabling of annual reports in the parliament on all projects supported by this capital program.

In 2002 an independent report was released following an inquiry into education which was conducted by Professor Tony Vinson. Professor Vinson noted the following conclusions from his independent inquiry. Australia’s investment in education now ranks in the bottom quarter of OECD countries. Federal funding to private schools, however, has increased by 128 per cent. Australia appeared to be the only OECD country in which school participation rates had been falling in the 1990s, yet we lavishly funded those private school systems with high participation and retention rates. Public schools educate the vast majority of children with special education needs, children from Indigenous communities and those who are socially disadvantaged. The great bulk of federal schools money now goes to private schools. Some private schools ‘operate at levels of recurrent expenditure that is more than double that of many government schools’, yet still taxpayers’ money pours into them. The federal government spends 0.75 per cent of GDP on schools but expenditure on public schools within this has declined to 0.26 per cent as the private school share has risen to 0.49 per cent.

I think this is a pretty telling picture. Public education has suffered considerably at the hands of the government, whereas rich elite private schools—such as the King’s School with its rugby and soccer fields, cross-country tracks, 50-metre swimming pools, cricket facilities and indoor shooting range—have seen extraordinary increases in funds provided by the taxes of my constituents in Lake Macquarie and Newcastle. We will be emphasising and reiterating these facts in the lead-up to next year’s election. We will be reminding the Australian people and government marginal seat holders that there are over 2.2 million students in public schools and over 190,000 public school teachers. There are nearly 200,000 public school staff, over 1.3 million TAFE students and nearly 46,000 TAFE teaching staff. Coalition members need to remember that public education is now the largest institution in Australia as we embark on the debate as to the direction for education in this country.
(Primary and Secondary Education Assistance) Amendment Bill 2003. It is a bill that reflects the ongoing commitment of the Liberal-National coalition to delivering improvements in educational standards and choices. This bill follows on from the important allocations made by this government in the recent budget for a further $48.2 million, over the term 2004-07, for capital grants for non-government schools and $210 million extra for literacy and numeracy programs—very important programs indeed. There is also an additional $44.6 million for literacy and numeracy in the current 2003-04 year. It is a bill that when enacted will enable ongoing federal assistance to capital works projects for government and non-government schools for the period 2004-07, carrying on the program of the current act, which provides for funding until 2004.

The debate on this bill provides a timely opportunity for me to speak on education issues. I would like to say something about the coalition’s policies on school education. During the last federal election, the Labor Party’s campaign tried to attack the coalition’s policies on this issue. The Labor Party generally, at both state and federal levels, seems to occupy much of its time in the education debate trying to generate an untruth that the coalition parties do not concern themselves enough with public education. Nothing could be further from the truth. The reality is that many of us who sit on the conservative benches in parliaments throughout Australia received our education in the public system. We know and understand the importance of having a system that gives young people and their parents a choice in education. The coalition is very focused on the desire for choice—choice for those who choose to send their children to a government school and choice for those who choose to send their children to a non-government school. That notion of choice is very important. It is choice for government schooling or choice for non-government schooling.

While school education is primarily the responsibility of state and territory governments, the Commonwealth has demonstrated its interest in and commitment to this area through capital grants programs and other policy initiatives. Providing a progressive education system for our young is fundamental to the future of our nation, and public education forms a core part of any debate on the most effective approach. Currently 2.2 million students attend state schools in Australia, and they receive more than $14 billion in funding each year. One million students in independent non-government schools receive about $4 billion each year. Any additional resources accruing to non-government schools come out of the pockets of parents over and above the taxes they have already paid—and that is an important point. They are paying quite substantial school fees in many cases over and above the taxes they have already paid. Those who choose private education are making a significant contribution to subsidising the cost of education in this country.

The coalition increased Commonwealth funding for non-government schools because it recognised that families have different capacities to support schools. What seems to have escaped the notice of many commentators is that there has also been a significant increase in federal funding for government run schools. Since being elected to government in 1996, the coalition has increased funding to state schools by some 52 per cent—an increase of around $811 million. That is almost $1 billion. This is despite the fact that enrolments over that period have increased by only 1.4 per cent. In the most recent federal budget, federal funding for state schools increased by 5.7 per cent. When we compare this to the New South Wales state Labor government’s funding for educa-
tion, which has increased by only a fraction of this amount, this paints a much more complete picture about who is making public education a priority.

Federal capital grants for schools are an important financial source of both government and non-government primary and secondary schools. They assist with capital projects at schools and thereby improve the opportunities available to students and provide for a higher quality of education in this country. The current act will see almost $1.3 billion directed through Commonwealth capital grants into schools by 2004. The breakdown of allocations between private and public schools reveals that over 72 per cent of the 2001-04 funding will go to government schools, despite the fact that this sector has only about 69 per cent of total enrolments. I think this figure clearly points out that the government has been working in the interests of both the government and non-government sectors in education.

I am proud of the fact that the commitment made to capital projects in both government and non-government schools has been reflected in some recent commitments to our region. For example, earlier this year I announced a $925,000 grant for the Boambee Public School. Boambee is an area in my electorate which is enjoying excellent ongoing growth, and the federal government will provide assistance so that that school can build a new hall. More recently I confirmed funding of $632,000 to assist four local non-government schools with capital works projects. Last month I had the pleasure to meet with the principal of St Mary’s Primary School in Bellingen, John Fletcher, the deputy principal, Jenny Triglone, and Father Jim Reilly. They took the time to show me how a federal grant of $172,709 under the capital grants program was going to assist them in the construction of new learning rooms and a library plus a new administration area. St Mary’s will commence work next year.

The federal government recently announced additional funding for a number of other schools in my electorate. Bishop Druitt College at Coffs Harbour will receive $300,000 for a major project which will see a multipurpose hall and three general learning areas constructed and improvements made to administration and pupil areas. At Coffs Harbour, the Casuarina Steiner School will receive $140,000 so that they can construct two new learning areas and improve the surrounds where buses pick up and drop off students. We would all have to agree that, in the interests of safety, we have to have quality areas where buses can pick up and drop off students, regardless of whether it is a private school or a public school. Bowraville’s Tallowood School will receive $20,000 so that adequate shade can be provided to students whilst they are playing on outdoor play equipment.

The federal government is investing in capital works at both government and non-government schools in my electorate. Facilities are being improved and parents are being given a genuine choice in the education they want for their children. The passing of this bill will allow schools to continue to offer attractive options in education to parents and students. Capital project funding, which will follow as a result of this bill, will assist in achieving an outcome that offers continuing choice in education.

As I have said previously, this government is about offering parents and students choice in education. In this year’s budget, $6.9 billion was allocated for education—a record amount. It is 8.3 per cent more than last year. The economic policies of this government have provided an added boost to schools’ capital projects this year with historically low-level interest rates, meaning that schools
that desire to go out into capital markets and borrow have been able to do so, taking advantage of lower interest rates rather than having to borrow at the horrendous interest rates that existed through the Labor years.

Another economic policy of this government that I would like to touch on is the introduction of the A New Tax System. As members would be aware, under the A New Tax System state governments are provided with all the revenue—that is, 100 per cent of the revenue—collected under the GST. The growth that exists through the GST enables state governments to divert extra money into education, but it seems they are still not matching the federal government in the area of education. The amount of revenue collected under the GST is set to grow over time. Not only does the GST provide extra funding, as I said; it also provides growth funding which will allow greater investment in education, improved educational outcomes and a better state education system.

Improvements to literacy and numeracy levels in our schools are an important priority. The government has been instrumental in establishing with the states and territories a national literacy and numeracy plan, setting goals and developing benchmarks for standards for years 3, 5 and 9. One of the important components of the action in Australia on literacy and numeracy is the Strategic Assistance for Improving Student Outcomes program, the SAISO program. This program aims to help lift the learning outcomes for educationally disadvantaged students. It also helps lift levels of participation in education for students with disabilities, and it is particularly focused on literacy and numeracy. Under this bill, SAISO will receive $33.79 million more in funding for 2004. The National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies and Projects program has received $3.46 million for 2003 and, under this bill, will receive $7.41 million more for 2004.

Literacy and numeracy levels have been improving. Historically, it has been difficult to ascertain information and data on how young Australians are going in this area across the nation. This government was instrumental when it came into office in laying foundations to measure literacy and numeracy skills nationwide. It is good news that all Australian education ministers agreed to move towards a system of reporting of children’s performance in this area to parents against national benchmarks. It is important to be able to compare the performance of students in New South Wales, the Northern Territory, the ACT and Western Australia. It is vital that parents receive information on how their children are progressing with their education at school against agreed benchmark standards. Reporting will also help to identify particular children in need of further educational assistance. Compared with other countries, it is encouraging for us that 15-year-old Australians are ranked by the OECD amongst the highest performers. Research results indicate that our mean performance for reading and literacy is the fourth highest in the OECD. We also achieved good rankings in science and mathematics.

Earlier this year I had the privilege to visit Willawarrin Public School and present the school with a cheque for $2,000. Willawarrin Public School is a school of approximately 100 students in the relatively isolated hills of the Macleay Valley. The school received the cheque after being named one of 60 schools in Australia to win an achievement award under the federal government’s literacy and numeracy awards program. The contribution of parents to the education of their children is realising excellent rewards at Willawarrin Public School. Willawarrin is a shining example of a school working with parents in order to get great outcomes for its students. I know that a number of the parents have freely given their time so that the school’s
overall literacy and numeracy skills have been raised. The students at the school are to be congratulated for their efforts, but we should also acknowledge the commitment of the parents and teachers, which is producing results at Willawarrin.

In addition to involving parents, the school also produced a video of their literacy and numeracy initiatives. That video has been circulated extensively across New South Wales so that other schools can be aware of what Willawarrin is achieving. I would like to recognise the contribution of all those who are participating in the literacy and numeracy program in Willawarrin. In particular, principal Peter Wells, teacher Jenny Young and parents such as Jenny Smith and Rhonda Mossell have played a leading role. But I think it has been the overall partnership between the school and parents which has created such a great result.

There are also high schools in my electorate which are leading the commitment to improved numeracy and literacy standards. On 3 November my government colleague and federal Minister for Education, Science and Training, Brendan Nelson, announced that Nambucca High School had been awarded $24,000 as part of their outstanding achievement in the federal government’s National Awards for Quality Schooling. I had the pleasure of congratulating the representatives of the school, Graham and Christine Beatton and Mark Holdsworth, who attended the presentation here in Parliament House.

Despite the improvements in recent years, we need to do more. We need to keep our eye on the ball and keep ensuring that we aim for higher educational outcomes to give our Australian students the best possible opportunities. Young Indigenous students remain an area of concern—they are 20 to 30 points under the averages for other students. There are other areas of continuing concern that would reinforce the fact that we need to keep striving in the areas of literacy and numeracy. The increased spending in this bill will allow such programs to enable children to achieve their potential.

I would like to take the opportunity to refer to APC Review, which is a publication of the Australian Parents Council. In a recent edition, the publication published a table detailing the commitments of both Commonwealth and state governments. It produced some interesting results. It is interesting to note that, for instance, in New South Wales, Commonwealth funding for education was increased by 5.7 per cent, but the comparable increase by the state government was only 0.8 per cent. If the state government in New South Wales had matched the federal government’s commitment to increased funding, it would have provided an additional $292.5 million for education in New South Wales.

Likewise, if we look at Victoria, federal government expenditure was increased by 6.1 per cent. How much did the Victorian state government and Mr Bracks increase expenditure? Only 2.3 per cent. If Mr Bracks had matched Dr Nelson, there would be $179 million in additional funding for education in Victoria. Let us look at Queensland. The federal government increase was 5.4 per cent. The Queensland government increase was 2.4 per cent. If the Queensland government had matched the federal government, $116 million extra would have gone into Queensland schools. In South Australia the federal increase was 5.3 per cent. The South Australian government did not do quite as badly as its counterparts at 4.9 per cent. That is a $5 million shortfall in South Australia.

With regard to Western Australia, the federal government increase was 5.1 per cent, versus 2.8 per cent by the Western Australian state government. That is $52.9 million that
the Western Australian government could have provided to schools if it had kept parity with the federal government. In Tasmania, the federal government increase was 5.6 per cent, whereas the Tasmanian state government increase was 2.9 per cent. It is a pretty sad story. The state Labor governments moan about the need for public education and the members opposite moan about the need to support public education but, when it comes to the crunch, their own state colleagues do not match the federal government’s increases and they do not support public education generally to the same extent that the federal government does through increases in funding. I would like to reaffirm the federal government’s commitment to the notion of choice in education and the notion that parents should be able to choose the type of education that they provide their children. I commend this bill to the House.

**Ms GEORGE (Throsby)** (8.21 p.m.)—In discussing the allocation of capital grants to non-government schools as encompassed in the States Grants (Primary and Secondary Education Assistance) Amendment Bill 2003, I think it is appropriate to reflect on what I consider to be obvious inequities in funding that we are witnessing under this government. Australia’s top shelf private schools are reaping a bonanza from very generous funding allocations from the Howard government. The bonanza is the outcome of the government’s SES system of funding, which, as we know, takes no account of schools’ existing facilities or the tuition fees that are charged at these very elite schools.

The amendments moved to this bill by our shadow minister the member for Jagajaga are timely, as they attempt to inject more accountability and transparency into the process of capital funding. It is not unreasonable that schools should demonstrate both educational and financial need as part of the test for capital grants. This is evidence that we believe should be publicly available. Further, annual reports should be provided to parliament on all projects supported by the Commonwealth’s capital program allocation. I think it not unreasonable that there should be minimum standards and tests, particularly in the context of a significantly underresourced public education system, which continues to cater for around 70 per cent of Australia’s school students.

The recent Vinson report, which looked into public education in New South Wales, found substantial substandard school infrastructure and other substandard physical conditions in government schools—so much so that it drove Professor Vinson, the independent chair of that inquiry, to comment: In so many instances, the fabric of the public schools is simply unworthy of what is being attempted within them and fails to honour our society’s obligation to its children.

Contrast that statement with a recent newspaper article that talked about the new communications network that is to be installed at Barker College at Hornsby, a level 2 school that is due to receive $3.1 million from the federal government next year. The communications network that has been installed at that school is one that public schools—certainly those in my electorate—could only ever dream of. The *Sydney Morning Herald* article entitled ‘Tax dollars at work for private schools’ said:

Barker College in Hornsby installed a new communications network this year, bringing state-of-the-art networking to the private school’s 200 teachers and staff and 1,870 students.

The company which installed the network, estimated to have cost around $250,000, boasted it would give faster access to the internet and allow students simultaneous access to the school’s growing library of digital educational videos.

Teachers would now be able to use their laptops as “soft phones” on the network. Voicemail messages come up as email while teachers and
students will be able to plug in to one of 2,132 network points around the school’s 20 hectares of well-kept buildings and rolling playing fields.

That is certainly an eye-opener. At one of my local primary schools, I was recently told that they had one computer per 14 students, yet we have this largesse continuing to be handed out to schools like Barker College which have facilities that students and staff in the public schools that I represent could only ever dream of. So I do not think we can divorce the issue of capital grants from an overall consideration of the federal government’s funding policies.

I believe that the non-government sector continues to be funded generously at the expense of the public education system, which, as I said earlier, continues to look after the needs and interests of about 70 per cent of our students. I specifically point to the 58 level 1 schools that will receive around $122 million in subsidies next year. That is an increase of almost $75 million on the funding levels of 2001—a 154 per cent increase in funds for these 58 elite level 1 schools. By 2006 the estimated contribution by the government to the funding of non-government schools will be in the order of $5.4 billion. It is interesting to look at that figure in the context of the current debate about the funding of our university sector. Under this government, it is reaching the stage where non-government schools are receiving as much federal government funding as is spent on the whole university sector.

The inequities in funding are perpetuated by the very inequitable SES formula. As we know, that formula takes no account of a school’s assets—its buildings and its land—nor does it take into account the fees that a school receives from its student population. Those fees are estimated to be growing at about seven per cent every year. The concept of funding on the basis of need was destroyed by this government and replaced by the SES system, which uses a very crude measure—the students’ postcodes—to determine the amount of funding that a non-government school will receive.

It is no wonder that the elite schools are doing so well. Let me refer to a few in my state. Trinity Grammar is due to receive $5.48 million next year from the federal government, an increase of 247 per cent since 2001. Newington is due to receive $3.65 million, an increase of 175 per cent. The King’s School is due to receive $3.23 million, an increase in funding from this government of almost 200 per cent since 2001. It is ironic, is it not, that the principal of the King’s School recently acknowledged, in a newspaper article, that it ‘costs a fair bit to run’ his 140-hectare site. After all, the King’s School does have 15 cricket fields, five basketball courts, a 50-metre swimming pool, an indoor rifle range and a gymnasium. Contrast that with the system that caters for 70 per cent of our school students, who continue to be educated in a very underresourced public education system.

As Professor Vinson found in his inquiry, less than 10 per cent of students from the poorest 50 per cent of families attend independent secondary schools. So this bill has to be seen in the wider context of the continuing inequities in the funding of both sectors and the increased funding of the elite schools, which I believe comes at the expense of the great needs that continue to exist in the public education system. Those needs do not exist just in the public education system, because, as Professor Vinson also found, substantial substandard school infrastructure and physical conditions exist in some of the systemic Catholic schools as well as in the public school system. Again that points to the basis of our belief that the needs based principle should continue to be the principle that guides the allocation of funds to both sectors.
Professor Vinson’s words about the fabric of the public schools being simply unworthy of what is being attempted within them does not bode well for a generation of Australian school children currently being educated in often rundown schools and, in many cases, in substandard demountable accommodation. Shellharbour Primary School in my electorate is but one example. Its student numbers doubled between 1997 and 2002, but until recently half of the school’s 736 students in 26 classes were being educated in demountables. They were educated in demountables, but the government was able to find an additional $3 million for the King’s School, with its splendid facilities. Those kinds of obvious inequities in the system are a cause of great concern throughout the educational community. The situation at Shellharbour Primary School has been rectified to some extent by the decision of the New South Wales government to build a new school at Flinders. However, roughly a third of students at the school continue to be taught in demountables.

What we are seeing in our government schools and our less well-off non-government and Catholic systemic schools is an increasing burden being shifted onto parents to meet basic educational needs, including the cost of new buildings, sports grounds, covered shelters, equipment and computers. What is more, parents are being put in a position where they are donating thousands of hours of voluntary labour to carry out simple yet vital school maintenance such as cleaning toilets, maintaining gardens and repairing playground equipment. P&Cs are increasingly being used as the revenue source to pay for new infrastructure projects. In a recent article, published in one of the daily newspapers, it was estimated that funds raised by individual parents and citizens groups now average about $20,000 per school per year. I know of a local school where the P&C was raising funds for covered walkways so that kindergarten classes would not be forced to get wet by walking 100 metres to the library when it rains. In another school the P&C recently raised $10,000 for very basic necessities such as sports equipment, library resources and computers. Again I make the point that the underresourced physical infrastructure of many of the schools in the public education system is being neglected while largesse is being delivered to schools whose facilities are such that people in the public sector can only ever dream of having access to them.

It is not only students and their parents who are suffering due to poor maintenance and lack of facilities in many of our schools; staff—particularly teaching staff—report increasing stress as a result of dealing with overcrowding in their classrooms due to large class sizes and also stress relating to the general devaluing of the role and position of educators in our society. As one frustrated and angry teacher told the Vinson inquiry:

The physical conditions teachers are expected to work in are demeaning and downright insulting ... why would young, up-and-coming professionals choose to work where they don’t have their own computer and where their personal work space to organise the learning of 150 to 180 students is little bigger than a small broom cupboard?

You can imagine how this teacher would react to the largesse afforded to Barker College, with its state-of-the-art communications network, which I have just described. Next year, on top of what it already has, Barker will get $3.1 million in Commonwealth funding.

In conclusion, I reiterate my support for the amendments that have been moved by the member for Jagajaga. Financial transparency and accountability are the norm for schools in the government sector. All schools regularly face performance audits and reviews of programs, management and school
leadership. Regrettably, to date, financial accountability does not operate in the same open and transparent manner in the non-government sector. While non-government schools do provide the department with financial information, it seems that a lot of this is not on the public record because that information is restricted by inappropriate confidentiality clauses. Senator Carr discovered this when he recently requested specific information on the private income of private schools in an estimates hearing. In response to his inquiry, the departmental official on that occasion said:

There are privacy arrangements about the Commonwealth collecting information from schools so we would not be in a position to be able to provide [the information requested]—

I think that is a totally untenable position. At present taxpayers are expected to contribute, and do contribute, more and more to the non-government school sector. So it seems logical in this context that the financial operations of the non-government school sector should be open to public scrutiny, greater transparency and accountability. It is for those reasons that I am firmly in support of the amendments that have been moved, which—at least in my judgment—would provide a much greater level of accountability and transparency in the provision of capital grants to the non-government school sector.

Mr ANTHONY SMITH (Casey) (8.37 p.m.)—The States Grants (Primary and Secondary Education Assistance) Amendment Bill 2003 is an important piece of legislation for young students and all schools right across Australia. It allocates Commonwealth money to provide additional capital funding for non-government schools and additional funds for important literacy and numeracy programs. It includes over $48 million for building projects over the years 2004 to 2007 and it also includes funding of over $54 million for 2003 and 2004, to continue the Howard government’s commitment to improving the literacy and numeracy educational outcomes for millions of young people around our nation and for more than 22,000 primary and secondary school students in the electorate of Casey.

These allocations are just a fraction of the total dollars being spent on Australia’s schools by the Howard government. In 2003-04, $6.9 billion is being spent on schools and their students. This is an increase of $528 million on the previous financial year. Whilst dollars being spent do not guarantee that a particular program is always a success, growth in Commonwealth funding for Australian schools of 93 per cent since 1996 is still a significant achievement. The government is delivering on its commitment to provide a high-quality education for young Australians, and our youth deserve all that our nation can possibly afford.

High-quality school education is, in conjunction with apprenticeships and a robust university system, lifting the education levels of young people in the 21st century to a standard that previous generations could only dream of. The capital funding the federal government provides helps government and non-government schools with the provision and upgrading of infrastructure. This includes projects like new classrooms, libraries, music and computer rooms, multipurpose halls and staff and administration facilities. Between 2001 and 2004, schools are to receive over $1.3 billion in capital funding. Of this total, $950 million will go to government schools and over $370 million to non-government schools. To put these large national funding amounts into perspective, around 72 per cent of capital funding goes to government schools, a sector that educates 68 per cent of Australia’s school students. Some $415,000 in capital funding has been allocated to non-government schools in Ca-
since 2001. Since the election of the Howard government in 1996, just over $1 million has been allocated to independent schools in our area.

It has been a privilege to regularly visit local schools right across my electorate. According to my observations, the principals and teachers are thoroughly committed to their work and to their respective school communities. It is clear that they are strongly focused on the wellbeing and advancement of their students. At the same time, the majority of young students are keen learners, always thinking seriously about the important issues of the day and, as most members in this House would know, only too ready to ask the tough questions.

From the school functions I have been part of, it is clear that many parents are just as strongly committed to ensuring that their local school offers the most positive and caring environment, focused on student wellbeing and learning. One tangible example of the interest and commitment of parents is the amount of fundraising done these days by many school communities as they undertake building works and other school improvements. Earlier this year I had the pleasure of attending the official opening of Mooroolbark East Primary School’s two new classrooms, music room, canteen, staffroom, conference room and resource centre. It was a great day for the school community and its more than 400 students. The federal government contributed $470,000 towards the original project, which still has one stage to go, were first developed in the mid-1990s. Since that time the school has been planning for increased student numbers as families move into surrounding new suburbs and new housing estates.

Other schools in Casey have recently completed building projects. These include Lilydale’s Edinburgh Adventist Primary School, which received $90,000 towards a total project cost of some $200,000 for a new classroom, furniture and equipment and basketball court. Officially opened in February, the combined grade 4 and 5 students have enjoyed their new much larger classroom throughout this year. The whole school, including its teams in the local basketball competition, have also appreciated the new court, which is used regularly for training at lunchtime and after school.

Similarly, Luther College in Croydon has received funding of $100,000 for the refurbishment of its science laboratories and other building modifications. The total project was worth almost half a million dollars, with the school itself providing the bulk of the money—$400,000. Another Casey school, Yarra Valley Grammar in Ringwood, has completed a building project worth $425,000, of which the federal government provided $125,000. That helped refurbish six classrooms, plus student common rooms and administration centres.

Government schools in Casey have received considerable federal capital funding—over $10 million—since 1996. Since 2001, five schools have received just over $3 million. Chirnside Park Primary School’s eight new classrooms and extended general purpose room cost over $1.3 million. The federal government provided $450,000 towards this cost. Importantly, the school community, like the Mooroolbark East Primary community, made a significant contri-
bution. The school fundraising committee worked tirelessly to raise $118,000 toward the project and similarly ensured that the project was able to incorporate a number of additional developments that had not previously been planned.

Likewise, Croydon Hills Primary has in the last 12 months built new classrooms, upgraded its library, staff administration and amenities. The cost of this project was around $1.3 million, of which the federal government contributed $1 million. The Howard government, through the Minister for Education, Science and Training, Dr Brendan Nelson, is committed to improving educational standards. As I said at the outset, this of course includes a focus on literacy and numeracy.

Two federal government programs aim to improve young people’s ability to read and write. One concentrates particularly on disadvantaged students whilst the other funds projects in the early to middle years of schooling, along with the links between literacy and numeracy and the pathways leading from school into the workforce. While many people have adequate literacy and numeracy skills, there are some who unfortunately do not and who struggle.

Not being able to read, write or count sufficiently well affects too many people in every aspect of their daily lives—at the supermarket, on public transport or, more particularly, through their working lives generally. Illiteracy reduces work force productivity, and people who are self-conscious about their lack of education and abilities are likely to want to avoid certain activities simply to hide their lack of writing, reading and numeric skills. This disengagement is undoubtedly a negative influence on them as individuals and it has a detrimental impact on our community. As a nation, it should be our goal to improve everyone’s literacy and numeracy levels. For children, this bill is very much part of the solution.

It is an obvious point, but young children should be getting help in their early years, at the time when their skills are being developed and when their problems can be first noticed, dealt with and fixed. It is clear that some literacy and numeracy problems arise in the early years of school. Unfortunately, not all students are able to advance their learning in the classroom without the additional assistance that is required. If literacy and numeracy problems are not detected and overcome in the crucial early years of primary school, students’ learning is affected almost immediately, and ultimately it can mean that individual students do not go on to achieve their full potential over the coming years. Everyone knows that we have to solve these problems early, for to go on to the secondary school level with a learning disadvantage can only compound the problem. Depending on how literacy and numeracy problems are handled in the classroom and, most importantly, at home, learning difficulties only worsen as more is expected and as people enter the workforce.

A local parent recently told me that 10 weeks of reading recovery has made a massive difference to the reading levels of their grade 1 child. As reading levels improved so did the child’s confidence and general level of achievement at school. It is commonplace for primary schools to have reading recovery programs for young children in the first couple of years of school and for older primary school students. It appears that these programs are working well and making a noticeable difference in the learning of young students. Individuals are learning more, which in turn improves the overall classroom environment.

Around our nation, all schools are now testing and reporting against national reading
and numeracy benchmarks. The benchmark statistics indicate that students are attaining improved levels of ability. Funding for literacy and numeracy programs and for school facilities is only part of the total expenditure on schools and students around our nation. Whilst the federal government does not run schools—they are the responsibility of the states and territories—it does provide a significant amount of taxpayers’ money each year to help pay salaries and to provide programs. As well as partially funding government schools, the Howard government is committed to allowing parents to have the choice to send their children to a private or independent school. The tuition fees paid by parents are reduced due to the recurrent funding received by Casey’s 19 independent schools. Reduced fees have the effect of making schooling at an independent school a real possibility for many families who otherwise would not have that choice. In 2002, almost $27 million was spent on local independent schools. This year it is anticipated that $27.2 million will be allocated. It is a fact that every child being educated privately actually saves taxpayers’ money across the nation.

Elsewhere within the education and training portfolio the Howard government, through a number of programs, is making a difference in schools, their communities and in young people’s everyday lives. Recently, I attended a special assembly at Croydon Primary School. Along with school captains, Kate Coppus and Aaron Liebelt, and the principal, Peter Ridgewell, we officially launched the school’s new flagpole—a simple thing, one may think but, surprisingly, as members on both sides will know, some schools either do not have a flagpole or have lost their flagpole through a range of factors, including vandalism and building works. Over the years flagpoles have not been replaced. In a small number of cases, as I said earlier, it appears that some newer schools have never had a flagpole installed in the first place.

Through their participation in school assemblies, when the flag is raised and the national anthem is sung, students can learn about and come to understand our national symbols. Croydon Primary School’s new flagpole and those of others around the nation have been made possible with funding up to a maximum of $1,500 per school through the Discovering Democracy program. This program offers young Australians numerous opportunities to become informed about our nation’s rich democratic traditions and values. Through the Boys’ Education Lighthouse Schools Program $3.8 million is being used to identify and showcase successful practices in the education of boys. A cluster of schools in the Yarra Valley, one of which is located in Casey, are sharing $20,000 funded through the Australian Government Quality Teacher Program.

Having focused on school education, I wish to highlight other examples of some of the good work that is occurring in Melbourne’s outer east. As parents know, the links between school and the work force are vitally important. The better the links the easier it is for young people to move from school into further training and the wider work force with success. The Eastern Industry Education Partnership is delivering vocational education opportunities and it ensures that there are effective partnerships between schools, industry and the wider community. Schools located in Casey providing vocational education opportunities include Billanook College, Croydon Community School, Croydon Secondary School, Lilydale Adventist Academy, Lilydale Heights Secondary College, Lilydale High School, Luther College, Maroondah Secondary College, Monbulk College, Mooroolbark Heights
Secondary College, Mt Evelyn Christian School and Oxley College.

KYM Employment Services operates the federally funded Jobs Pathway Program. The dedicated team at KYM is assisting 14- to 19-year-olds make a smooth transition between school and work. One of the largest in Australia, the program in our region is working to ensure that young people leaving school do not get left behind at a time when they are making critical decisions about their careers and adult lives. The assistance provided varies depending on the individual need, but it may include personal development, support to remain at or to return to school, career counselling, job search preparation and referral to vocational education and training. KYM has also delivered a careers and transition pilot program operating in a number of secondary schools in Mt Evelyn, Mooroolbark and Lilydale and it has focused on helping young teenagers to make the right choices as they move into the work force.

Another program is working more broadly and it is known as the Real Game Series. It has operated or continues to operate in a number of Casey’s schools, such as Croydon Secondary College, Pembroke Secondary College, Lilydale Heights Secondary College, Mooroolbark Heights Secondary College and Birmingham Primary School. The Real Game Series helps students to make the connection between school and their future life so that they understand the impact that choices and decisions made now can have on their working career and quality of life as adults.

The Howard government is delivering on our commitment to young Australians and their schools. Increased funding is helping to deliver quality programs and new facilities. Combined, these can only mean improved education outcomes into the future. Young Australians deserve every chance to learn and to get ahead. This bill is very much part of the Howard government’s plan for them and I commend it to the House.

Dr LAWRENCE (Fremantle) (8.52 p.m.)—Obviously I will not have an opportunity to complete my remarks on the States Grants (Primary and Secondary Education Assistance) Amendment Bill 2003 this evening, but I did want to pick up on a point that flows from the observations of the member who spoke previously: if choice means that people have the right to choose schools on the basis that they are underfunded and of poorer quality, that is no choice at all. Unfortunately a lot of the rhetoric of the current government is based around the idea that people should be able to afford a higher standard of education and better funding that applies in some of our independent schools. In my view, that is no choice at all.

As a member of the Labor Party, I have always been passionately committed to the idea of egalitarianism; the notion that each person is of equal worth and that any limitations on their achievement and their ability to share in society’s goods should be systematically broken down. Unfortunately this government is not doing that. Breaking down that disadvantage requires public action and investment. The conservatives embrace—if they do at all, as we have heard from the previous speaker—a pallid version of equal opportunity. They think it is enough to let people step up to the mark and do as well as they can no matter what handicaps they start with. They speak from a vantage point of privilege, often blind to their advantages. They fail to understand that promoting equal opportunity requires active intervention to minimise disadvantage and to ensure that people’s life chances are more equal so that the accident of your birth does not cripple your future.
Most Australians will tell you that they still hold firm to the view that ours is an egalitarian society. Indeed, there are some who would argue that egalitarianism is the value that defines us as a nation. While a lot of us are uneasy about the widening income and wealth gaps we see, many still appear to accept the boast made by our leaders, including the Prime Minister, that ours is a nation of equals where the ethic of a fair go is the norm that governs our private and public relations. But it is important to ask, particularly in the context of this bill: is it really so? There is a lot of evidence now which challenges this very comfortable assertion. While researchers may disagree about the extent of the problem, they generally agree that inequality amongst Australians is increasing and that egalitarianism itself may be under threat as a defining social objective. Importantly, they all agree that it matters, and so do I.

I was recently asked to review three new books on the subject of inequality and poverty and was struck by the fact that, although they use different data sources and different levels of analysis, all three reached the same conclusion—that is, we are a less equal society than we have ever been. Fred Argy, in his book *Where to From Here?*, argues that Australia’s distinctive form of egalitarianism evolved over 70 years through institutional, regulatory and policy mechanisms, described in his terms as a form of state paternalism and defined by a commitment to a strong role for government in advancing human wellbeing.

The historic roots of our egalitarian ethic—and it is important to look at it in the context of education—lie in a pragmatic commitment to sharing the wealth of the country and the benefits of productivity, particularly through the award and wage fixing system—the so-called wage-earners welfare state. One of the features of this settlement was a recognition that government could be and should be a major player in achieving equality.

Argy details what he calls the seven pillars, which were deliberately created by government action. They are the virtual guarantee of full-time employment; the protection of wages and conditions of workers; an unconditional needs based welfare safety net; a strongly progressive tax system; generous government provision of non-cash benefits, such as education, health and housing; a balanced distribution of regional economic opportunities; and the capacity for people to be involved in workplace decisions affecting their wellbeing. Argy’s analysis of the extent of the erosion of these pillars and the reasons for the decline makes sobering reading indeed.

There is a lot of data now on Australian incomes that show a widening gap between citizens. As Stephen Long has observed, a map of Australia depicting the distribution of income and employment would show ‘a nation fracturing along class, residential and ethnic lines’. As he indicates, the gap is not just between the rich and the poor but also between the rich and the rest of us, and education is vital in this.

The National Centre for Social and Economic Modelling calculated that in 1990 the richest 10 per cent of Australian families received 23 per cent of the national income, which was an increase from 1982, while the poorest 10 per cent received less than three per cent, which was a decline. Income movements are reinforcing these differences. Between 1993-94 and 1998-99, 2.2 million Australians in the lowest 20 per cent received an average weekly increase of $9 while the top 20 per cent received $343—and the current government is talking about more tax breaks for the wealthy. Similarly, NATSEM recently reported that the number of low-wage earners doubled between the
mid-eighties and the mid-nineties and that over the last decade, especially since the mid-nineties when this government took control, income inequality has been increasing.

Despite our myth-making, Australia has relatively high levels of inequality by international standards. Incomes after taxes and transfers—including benefits, rebates et cetera—are more unequal in Australia than in all but a few of the OECD countries, which points to a tax transfer system which is less effective than other developed nations. As Argy points out, while Australia has a relatively progressive tax system, it spends less on redistribution than other countries. We have even greater disparities in wealth, with the top 10 per cent owning 52 per cent of the nation’s wealth. Since 1993, the share of the nation’s wealth held by the richest 10 per cent has increased by almost five per cent. The increase since 1996, when this government took over, has been even more concentrated. The richest one per cent—the friends of this government—increased their share of wealth from 12 to 15 per cent, and this has been made at the expense of those on middle incomes.

I am aware that inequality has many different faces apart from those captured by these aggregate figures on income and wealth distribution. There are inequalities in Australians’ working lives, reflected in lengthening working hours for some and too little work for others, fewer full-time jobs, unequal job opportunities, greater job insecurity and increasing numbers of long-term unemployed and marginal and discouraged job seekers. Australian workers have not received their fair share of the rapid productivity growth of the nineties, and the dispersion of income has become more unequal. Earnings growth has been much faster for managers and those in professions and trades than for labourers and clerical and service workers. I will make it very clear why education is so important to these inequalities at a later stage.

Debate interrupted.

ADJOURNMENT

The SPEAKER—Order! It being 9.00 p.m., I propose the question:

That the House do now adjourn.

Christmas

Mr QUICK (Franklin) (9.00 p.m.)—Mr Speaker, tonight, along with dozens of my colleagues, we enjoyed your hospitality at your annual Christmas barbecue, for which we thank you. Christmas decorations are busily being put up in the offices here in the House of Representatives. Most of us are dragging out last year’s Christmas card list and are busy trying to think of what we might say inside the cards for this year. Sadly, some of our friends have died and will no longer be around this Christmas. Other friends and acquaintances are doing it tough and are battling illness and family crises.

In 31 days, most if not all of us will be sharing Christmas Day with our close family friends. Our presents will be opened and strewn around the lounge room floor or else put away from the prying fingers of the youngsters in our family celebration. Thoughts of yet more to eat for the Christmas evening meal will be pushed far into the recesses of our mind as we progress through Christmas Day. Some of us will also be thinking of our loved ones who are living overseas—in many cases our children. We will be wondering what they are up to as they prepare for their usually wintry festive season in Europe. Perhaps they might even experience a white Christmas.

I have a brother living in New Jersey, a sister in Pershore in the United Kingdom and a sister in Victoria. My eldest daughter, Sarah, and her husband, Michael, are living in London. Christmas for my family is one of
long-distance calls and emails, usually the day before because of time zone differences. Yet despite the hassles, time zones, distances and absences, we can get together at this special time, this Christmas 2003—a time of family oneness, a time of sharing and a time for reflection.

Many in our community unfortunately will not be so lucky, so happy, so fortunate, so blessed this Christmas 2003. For them the season of goodwill, of gift giving and of plenteous food on the table is not theirs to enjoy. I am not talking here about the thousands of Australian families who yearly rely on the Smith Family, the Salvation Army, Anglicare, Centacare or the many other agencies for their Christmas good cheer. Sadly, in our great country—the lucky country—many will spend Christmas 2003 behind razor wire fences and, in some cases, behind electric fences.

Christmas supposedly is a time of goodwill to all mankind. Disappointingly, Australia will see 94 children in detention in this lucky country of ours and will be responsible for another 90 children in Pacific island detention centres. At this time of year we hear that uplifting and inspiring music from Handel’s Messiah and sing those words from Isaiah:

For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.

And at this time of year these 184 children are living out their Christmas behind these fences—fences similar to those I saw when I walked inside Auschwitz during my trip to Poland in 2000. Not only are these 184 children spending this Christmas behind razor wire; some have spent more than one Christmas in these detention centres.

Detention of children at Christmas 2003 is in several instances part of the enforced separation of families. I feel a real emptiness when I realise I will be separated from my family this Christmas. I like to have my family around me and to share in the generational joy that abounds at Christmas time. As Christmas 2003 nears, is the detention of these 184 children how we as Australians want to treat families in this country? I would urge this government to release these 184 children and to let them share in the joy and celebration that Australians will be experiencing throughout this country this Christmas.

Higher Education: Reform

Mr LLOYD (Robertson) (9.05 p.m.)—I rise tonight to support the government’s reform measures in the higher education sector. If you listened to members opposite, you would think that these measures were reducing funding, particularly in regional areas. Nothing could be further from the truth. Certainly, in my own area, the University of Newcastle and the Ourimbah campus on the Central Coast of New South Wales will gain significantly from these reforms. Yet the Labor Party runs its lines that they are going to suffer and that students will not be able to afford the courses. Again, that is simply not correct.

The Newcastle university will in fact gain an additional $19 million over three years under the new funding arrangements. The university will also receive its fair share of additional student places, to be available from 2005, and is well placed to receive additional funding from the new $138 million teaching and learning performance fund. It should also be noted that, for the first time, the University of Newcastle Ourimbah campus students will have access to Commonwealth scholarships worth up to $24,000 to
help them with their education accommodation costs.

Funding to the University of Newcastle from the federal government has increased by almost $10 million since 1996. The university has also received more than $180 million for capital works and infrastructure projects since 1996. Of this, more than $15 million has been invested in the magnificent campus at Ourimbah on the Central Coast of New South Wales. The university will receive federal funding of more than $270 million over three years under the new arrangements from 2005.

I, as a member of the government, am not the only one who is saying that these reforms are important and that these reforms are in the interests of the University of Newcastle, and particularly in the interests of the Ourimbah campus. I will quote from a newspaper article from the Central Coast News headed ‘Future grim without plan’. It says:

The University of Newcastle’s Central Coast campus, Ourimbah, will become stagnant if a federal government higher education reform bill is not implemented.

The claim, made by Central Coast Campus director Barry McKnight and pro-vice chancellor Terry Lovat ...

“… … …

“In the last five to six years higher education has remained static and the tertiary sector has been doing more with less,” Dr McKnight said.

“After five years with no growth and an increase in our population my personal belief is we need an increase in education places.

“If we let this package fall through we are not going to go anywhere.”

Professor Lovat said aspects of the reform including $1.5 billion in funding to higher education institutions over five years would stimulate growth.

“This is a five-year plan, we are looking forward to a time when universities will be able to increase their loads by 50 to 60 per cent,” Mr Lovat said.

“To simply say no to these reforms would be pretty disastrous for the sector.”

I remind members opposite of what Barry McKnight and Terry Lovat have said by repeating:

“To simply say no to these reforms would be pretty disastrous for the sector.”

The article continues:

“What are we going to say to the young people we don’t have the places for if this reform doesn’t go through?” Dr McKnight said.

“The essence of the plan is positive, staying where we are— which is the Labor Party proposal— has no future, especially in a region such as this with our booming population,” Professor Lovat said.

“The sector needs more places, particularly regional Australia.

“At this stage there is no decline, but if nothing gets through we will stay where we are with caps on courses we wouldn’t normally have.”

Professor Lovat said while the campus’ current funding structure meant many students were missing out on places the reforms— the government reforms— would allow the university to offer more places in high demand courses.

“At the heart of the reform is a plan for growth, the first we have had for a lot of years ...

This is a ringing endorsement from the people who should know: the people who run the Ourimbah campus of the University of Newcastle, the people who will benefit from the government reforms—a government that has had the strength of character to try and push through these reforms which are an advantage and which will allow more young people on the Central Coast to go to university. (Time expired)
Ms HALL (Shortland) (9.10 p.m.)—Over the last couple of months, my office has been inundated with inquiries and complaints from constituents who have been receiving enormous debts from Centrelink. Quite often these debts are incorrect. They are causing great anxiety and stress to the people who receive the debts. In addition to that, I have been approached by Centrelink staff who have told me that they need somebody in this parliament to stand up for them—somebody to put their case and put to the parliament just how difficult it is for them to work under the current conditions. So in my contribution tonight I would also like to speak on behalf of those Centrelink staff who are struggling to come to terms with the policies and the changes that have been put upon them by this government.

In speaking tonight I would like to highlight a couple of cases that have been brought to my attention over the last couple of weeks. Last week a lady from Caves Beach contacted my office because she had received a debt notice of $1,500 in October. Her letter stated that she had to contact one particular section—the veterans’ affairs section—at Centrelink. When she did, she was told that the person she was asked to contact was not available. When she finally did talk to that person, they said that the debt had been incurred because the lady had not been informing Centrelink of changes in her income. That was not correct, because this particular lady had spent a considerable amount of time contacting Centrelink and giving them up-to-date details of the changes. Finally, they told her she needed to talk to another section in Centrelink. This gives an idea of the convoluted nature of Centrelink.

After a couple of days of deliberation and going from one section to another, thankfully this debt was waived. We have found that with a number of these inquiries the debt has been waived. This lady is deeply concerned that Centrelink staff are not receiving adequate training and that they are shifted from one section to another. She is very worried and upset about the way customers do not receive correct information, how the systems change, how the computer systems are faulty and how people can receive up to eight letters—eight is the maximum number anyone has told me—in one day from Centrelink, with each of those letters having different information in it. This creates a lot of anxiety and stress for people. This particular lady is in receipt of five different types of income support through Centrelink. It is because each of these is calculated differently that there have been problems in Centrelink. The point that she emphasised when she spoke to me was the need for Centrelink to streamline their services so that they can deal with people like her.

I would like to talk about another lady and her husband. They both received the pension and 10 years ago they claimed the Dutch super entitlement. They told social security, as it was called then, at St Marys about their pension. Social security suggested that they start paying tax but that it would not affect things. Recently a Centrelink worker in Tasmania contacted this family and informed them that they had incurred a $7,480 debt. Another person from Centrelink contacted them a few days later and asked whether they owned their mobile home—they live in a relocatable home village—because they might have to sell it to repay the debt. This has created extreme anxiety for the family. The manager of the relocatable home village contacted my office because he was so concerned about the emotional and physical distress this couple was experiencing. I would argue that any system that is causing so many problems in the community and so much anxiety for people who look to the
Dr SOUTHcott (Boothby) (9.15 p.m.)—I want to report to the House on the visits I made to two government primary schools in my electorate last Friday. Firstly, I was given the honour of opening the 50th anniversary celebrations of Paringa Park Primary School in North Brighton. This was a happy event. It is worth noting that many of the western suburbs within the electorate of Boothby were subdivided following the war, and we are now seeing the 50th anniversaries of residents associations, kindergartens, churches and schools. So it was a real privilege to attend the 50th anniversary celebrations of Paringa Park Primary School. This school has educated people like the former AFL premiership captain Stephen Kernahan, the Australian Idol judge Mark Holden and the head of surgery at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Professor Guy Madden. It certainly boasts an eclectic group of students. My brother, my sister and I were also educated at this school, and we had a very positive experience there. It really does show the benefits of what is available in the public sector from a government school.

It was a real honour to open the 50th anniversary celebrations, which I did with Sue Cardwell, who is another old scholar of the school. It was also great to meet with the former teachers—Nan Baldock, who taught there from 1965 to 1992 and who continues to have a very active involvement in the community; Russell Potter; and Roger Shearer—although there were many other teachers with whom I was not so familiar. It was a well-attended function. Dr Duncan McFetridge, the state member for Morphett, was in attendance. All credit goes to Peter Verrier, the principal, for the message and values which he imparts to the students.

However, I was struck by the fact that the newest building on campus was actually built when I was there in 1976 and that there has been no new building since then. In fact, the buildings have not changed at all. Most of the students hold their classes in 1953 Bristol buildings which were brought out from the UK.

That morning I also went to Brighton Primary School, which is over 125 years old, and I received very much the same message: they have received no money for capital funding. I am finding this problem from one end of my electorate to the other. A proposed $2 million upgrade at Coromandel Valley Primary School was cancelled by the state government, even though $1.2 million was funding from the Commonwealth government. Now the school is going ahead with a $1.2 million upgrade, and not one cent is from the state government. To my knowledge, it is unprecedented for a state government primary school to not receive one cent from a state government for the construction of a building. The problem I have with this is that the Rann Labor government were elected to make education a priority, yet from one end of my electorate to the other—even though the government are receiving over $3,000 million in revenue from the GST—I find government primary schools which are struggling to find the money to make very important capital upgrades to their facilities.

In conclusion, it was a great honour to attend the 50th anniversary of Paringa Park Primary School. I had a very positive experience there, and I am sure most of the other people who attended that school did as well. I was also pleased to be able to visit Brighton Primary School and speak to the students there. (Time expired)
Eden-Monaro Electorate: Rail Services

Mr NAIRN (Eden-Monaro) (9.20 p.m.)—A couple of months ago, without any notification whatsoever, the New South Wales government cancelled the rail service between Sydney, Queanbeyan and Canberra. Nobody was warned that this would occur. After a lot of hoo-ha, with people asking, ‘What is going on? Why don’t we have a rail service anymore?’ the excuse was: ‘We had some staffing problems.’ This is an organisation that would turn over a few hundred million dollars a year, I presume, if not more. They had staffing problems; therefore, they had to cancel the rail service!

After a lot of jumping up and down by people, some services were restored, but the early morning service from Queanbeyan and Canberra to Sydney was not restored. People who are used to going up to Sydney, doing some business or having a medical appointment or something like that and being able to get back in the afternoon cannot do so because the late afternoon return service has also been cancelled. The services that they put back on were put back on at such times of the day that you could not go up to Sydney, do some work and come back again.

I thought to myself: ‘Where was the state member in all of this?’ It seems that he did not even know that this was going to happen. The state minister cancelled the rail service and, I suspect, did not even tell the local member that this was going to happen. This was a state member who campaigned on the basis that you should have somebody who is part of the government so that you can really get things done. But the state minister cancelled the rail service and did not even tell the local member about it.

To try to overcome this embarrassment, the local member showed up at a public meeting, along with one of the union guys. He was outraged. He said: ‘It’s dreadful that the state government has cancelled this rail service. We’ve got to do something about it, Queanbeyan.’ One could be forgiven for thinking, ‘This bloke obviously is not part of the government.’ There he is, jumping up and down and saying, ‘We as a community have to protest and make sure that we get our rail service back.’ It would never have been cancelled in the first place if he had been doing his job. Instead of getting the rail service back, his solution to the problem is to form a committee. The great Labor way to get around embarrassments is to form a committee. So he is going to form a committee—made up predominantly of bureaucrats, I might add—to put in a submission to the minister to get the rail service back. It is a fundamental service between the national capital and Queanbeyan to Sydney and back again. This situation is quite unbelievable. The people of Queanbeyan certainly do not want a committee; they just want their rail service back.

I understand that through all of this the New South Wales government decided that they were going to do a report and look at country rail services. The report is suggesting that there should be a bus service instead of a rail service. They want to run people up to Goulburn in buses. The idea is if that you cannot have a train, take a bus and then get a train. It is just not good enough. There are a number of people, particularly those with medical conditions, who cannot travel on a bus. They are used to using the rail service.

I saw in the paper the other day that the Auditor-General in New South Wales has done a bit of an investigation into the State Rail Authority and has found that it has been putting out some pretty shonky figures. The New South Wales government, I suspect, have utilised shonky figures to justify cutting a rail service. One of the shonky figures, as I understand it, is that people travelling from Sydney to Goulburn are not included in the
figures for travel in the country. The service out to Goulburn is classified as a city service. Therefore, they are using those sorts of figures to say that there are not enough people travelling on this service.

It has had a huge impact on my constituents in Queanbeyan. I know it has had a huge impact on the constituents in Canberra. The member for Fraser, who is sitting opposite, ought to be jumping up and down as well. The ACT government is tentatively jumping up and down, but that is about all—and the state member for Monaro, Steve Whan, has done nothing. All he has done is form a committee rather than give us our train service back. *(Time expired)*

**Trade: Free Trade Agreement with United States**

*Mr McMULLAN (Fraser) (9.26 p.m.)*—I want to raise tonight my very serious concern about the indications from the Prime Minister and the Minister for Trade that Australia’s content regulation on free-to-air television and other audiovisual communications might be in jeopardy as a consequence of the negotiation of a free trade agreement with the United States. The Prime Minister has made it clear that something approximating a standstill—*they are not his words, but they are the trade policy implications of the words he used*—might be acceptable to the government in return for other concessions. I think this is profoundly wrong and I will seek opportunities to make that clear later. It is also profoundly in conflict with the government’s own articulation in international trade negotiations as recently as July last year, when it said:

> Australia supports the principle of technological neutrality. There should be no discrimination on the basis of the means of delivering a service.

Following this approach, an audiovisual content service would not need to be reclassified because it was delivered in a different way—for example by using an Internet delivery service.

But, if the government agrees to a standstill, that principle will be breached because we will have a different regulatory regime for free-to-air television. We will not be able to develop pay TV regulation in the same manner, nor anything in the area of Internet or video on demand or other such delivery systems. The government went on in its submission—*when it had its trade policy right, as against now when it is in serious danger of getting it profoundly wrong*—to say:

Government support for the sector—that is, the audiovisual sector—is ... provided in areas of greatest market failure—those links in the value chain where activity would not occur, or would fall to levels likely to threaten industry sustainability in the absence of subsidy.

I want to talk for a moment about the question of market failure. I am a committed free trader—I have argued for it in public and within my party for years—but there are two special reasons why the cultural sector
should be dealt with differently. One, which is a case for a contribution on another occasion, relates to the significance of culture to the national integrity of any country. Every country should preserve the right to defend and protect its own culture, not for economic reasons but for cultural reasons.

Tonight I want to focus on the economic case. In the United States the costs of television production are substantially or fully recovered from the domestic market. American television product is sold into the Australian market at a fraction of the real costs of production. For example, and this is in data provided by the Australian Film Commission, an American series costing $A1.7 million per hour to produce and fully financed out of the US market—that is, they have recouped their costs and made their profits in the United States—can be sold to an Australian broadcaster for $A30,000 to $A100,000 per hour. I conclude these remarks by saying this is a profound breach of commitments that the government has properly made in the past. I will say more about this later.

Mr Organ to present a bill for an act to provide for the appointment of a Royal Commission to investigate the implementation of a system of proportional representation for elections of the House of Representatives, and for related purposes. (Royal Commission (House of Representatives Elections) Bill 2003)

Ms Roxon to present a bill for an act to get kids out of detention before Christmas 2003. (Migration Legislation Amendment (Children and Families) Bill 2003)

Mrs Gash to move:
That this House calls on the Government to fund a national study to determine the prevalence of Parkinson’s disease in the Australia community and that:

(1) the study determine the number of sufferers, the range of symptoms experienced by sufferers, the length of time taken to reach diagnoses of sufferers, the extent of the load on carers and quantify the real cost of Parkinson’s disease in Australia;

(2) on presentation of the study to the Parliament, sufficient resources are applied to improve the diagnoses, treatment and quality of life for sufferers and their carers, in both the short and long-term; and

(3) included in any action subsequent to the presentation of the results of the study, further resources be made available to better educate current and future doctors, nurses and paramedics in the range of symptoms identified as pertaining to Parkinson’s disease, how to diagnose the disease and how to advise the sufferer and carers involved.

Mr Fitzgibbon to move:
That this House:

(1) notes that the proposed National Highway project linking the northern end of the F3 Freeway and the New England Highway north of Branxton remains unconstructed;

(2) notes the importance of the project to the Hunter’s economic and social well-being and the economic and social well-being of regions further north and west; and
(3) calls upon the Howard Government to immediately commit to both an acceptable construction timetable and to construction funding.
QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

The following answers to questions were circulated:

Rail: Melbourne to Gladstone Link
(Question No. 1568)

Mr Martin Ferguson asked the Minister for Industry, Tourism and Resources, upon notice, on 5 March 2003:

(1) What actions, decisions and/or representations have been taken by his Department or any other Commonwealth Department as a result of the decision to award Major Project Facilitation status to the Melbourne to Gladstone Rail Link project.

(2) What costs have been incurred by the Government in relation to the project having this status and for what specifically were these costs incurred.

(3) What are the criteria for awarding this status to a project and do they include whether the project (a) involves over $50 million of expenditure and (b) must be commercially viable.

(4) On what information, study or report did the Government determine that this project is commercially viable and was that assessment of viability for the project from Melbourne through to Gladstone or some other destination, and if so, what was that destination.

(5) Did the assessment made by his Department that the project is commercially viable include financial or any other assistance available from any Government, Commonwealth or State; if so what assistance was included from which governments.

(6) Which section of his Department assessed the commercial viability of the project and was either Treasury or the Department of Finance and Administration involved in that assessment; if not, why not.

Mr Ian Macfarlane—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) The Department of Industry, Tourism and Resources has undertaken facilitation actions in the form of discussions concerning approvals processes with relevant Commonwealth and State agencies.

(2) There has been no funding outlay by the Commonwealth.

(3) Criteria for Major Project Facilitation (MPF) status are that the project:
   (a) Has a total capital investment of over $50 million;
   (b) Requires Commonwealth Government approval(s) administered under Commonwealth legislation to proceed; and
   (c) Has sufficient financial resources to complete the Commonwealth Government approval(s) process and there is demonstrated reasonable commercial viability of the project.

(4) The following information, studies and reports contributed to the assessment on reasonable commercial viability:
   (b) AIRE Pre-feasibility Study (Melbourne to Brisbane), Maunsell McIntyre Pty Ltd in association with Access Economics, Macquarie Bank and Corrs Chambers Wesgarth, July 2000;
(c) Australian Transport and Energy Corridor Ltd, Melbourne-Brisbane-Gladstone Inland Rail Link, Initial Advice Statement, Mauusell Australia Pty Ltd and Ove Arup and Partners, October 2001;

(d) Australian Transport and Energy Corridor Ltd, Freight Market Study: Toowoomba-Emerald-Gladstone, Mauusell McInytre Pty Ltd in association with Access Economics, May 2001;

(e) Macquarie Bank’s involvement as financial advisers on the Melbourne to Brisbane segment of the project since 2000;

(f) Granting of Significant Project Status by the Queensland Government for the Melbourne to Brisbane and Gladstone routes.

(5) No.

(6) Invest Australia; no; MPF status involves no Commonwealth funding outlay.

Organisational Heads: Official Visits
(Question No. 1834)

Mr Tanner asked the Treasurer, upon notice, on 13 May 2003:

Since 1 January 2002, on how many occasions have the heads of the following organisations visited Western Australia in their official capacities: (a) the Australian Securities and Investments Commission, (b) the Australian Prudential Regulation Authority, (c) the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission, (d) the Productivity Commission, (e) the Australian Taxation Office, and (f) the Reserve Bank.

Mr Costello—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(a) The Australian Securities and Investments Commission has advised that in the period between 1 January 2002 to 30 September 2003 the members of the Australian Securities and Investments Commission (ASIC) have visited Western Australia on twelve occasions in their official capacity. It should be noted that ASIC has a permanent office in Western Australia and that the ASIC Regional Commissioner for Western Australia is a senior agency officer based in Perth.

(b) The APRA Board did not visit Western Australia in its official capacity during the 1 January 2002 to 13 May 2003.

Mr Graeme Thompson, APRA CEO, visited Western Australia once in his official capacity during the period 1 January 2002 to 13 May 2003. APRA’s Western Australia office is located at Level 9, QV1 Building, 250 St Georges Terrace, Perth WA 6000.

APRA’s South West region, which encompasses Perth, Melbourne and Adelaide, is headed by Mr Stephen Glenfield, a general manager located in the Melbourne office.

(c) The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission has a regional office located at Level 3, East Point Plaza, 233 Adelaide Terrace, Perth. The then Chairman, Professor Allan Fels AO, visited Western Australian once. In addition, the following members of the Commission also visited:

- Mr Sitesh Bhojani, on six occasions, including once whilst acting as Chairman;
- Dr Cousins once;
- Mr Martin once

(d) The Chairman of the Productivity Commission undertook one visit during the period. In addition, the following Commissioners visited in connection with particular public inquiries:

- Mrs Helen Owens (Disability Discrimination Act);
- Mr Tony Hinton (Harbour Towage and Related Services and Review of Mutual Recognition Arrangements); and
Mr Michael Woods (National Workers’ Compensation and Occupational Health and Safety Frameworks).

(e) The Commissioner of Taxation visited Western Australia once in June 2002. The primary reason for his visit to Perth on 13-15 June 2002 was to address the CPA convention on 14 June 2002 at Scarborough. In addition, the Commissioner met with staff of the Australian Taxation Office at the Northbridge office on 13 and 14 June 2002.

(f) The Reserve Bank Governor did not visit Western Australia in an official capacity during the period 1 January 2002 to 13 May 2003. Over the same period, the Reserve Bank Deputy Governor has visited Perth once, in February 2003. The Reserve Bank has a permanent office in Perth, which is one of its four regional offices.

Aviation: Brisbane Airport Master Plan
(Question No. 1966)

Mr Murphy asked the Minister for Transport and Regional Services, upon notice, on 29 May 2003:

(1) Is he aware of the Senate committee report on the Inquiry into the Development of Brisbane Airport Corporation Master Plan dated June 2000 and the eight recommendations in the majority report at paragraphs 1.23 to 1.30 inclusive.

(2) Is he aware that Sydney Airport Corporation Limited (SACL) has commenced administrative processes in late December 2002 in order to fulfil its statutory obligations under the Airports Act 1996 for Sydney Airport to have a master plan.

(3) With respect to Recommendation 1 of the Senate report, has the Airports Act 1996 been amended to include an object and purpose statement for airport master plans; if so, when, if not, why not.

(4) With respect to Recommendation 2 of the Senate report, has the Airports Act 1996 been amended to specify the relationship a major development plan has to the Master Plan; if not, why not.

(5) With respect to Recommendation 3 of the Senate report, has the Airports Act 1996 been amended to include more prescriptive requirements for community consultation by airport owners and airport-lessees; if not, why not.

(6) With respect to Recommendation 4 of the Senate report, has the Department of Transport and Regional Services developed a set of protocols which outline the requirements for community consultation in relation to airport master plans and major development plans; if so, when and will he table a copy of those protocols in the House; if not, why not.

(7) What action is the SACL taking to conduct more open consultation with affected groups, including community groups; if no action has or is being taken, why not.

(8) With respect to Recommendation 6 of the Senate report, has the Airports Act 1996 been amended to place a responsibility on airports to disclose to the public draft flight path information prepared by AirServices Australia as part of draft master plans; if so when, if not, why not.

(9) Did he direct the SACL to investigate different community consultation models in order to identify the various ways in which more effective community consultation can be conducted; if so, when did you issue that direction; if not, why not.

(10) With respect to Recommendation 8 of the Senate report, have the dual roles of AirServices Australia as government adviser and external consultant been critically examined to determine whether there is a potential for conflict of interest; if so, when was that critical examination undertaken and will he table this examination in the House; if no examination has been undertaken, why not.
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(11) Why is the administrative process governing the drafting of the master plan for Sydney Airport essentially the same flawed process criticised in the Senate report as that which governed the drafting of Brisbane Airport’s master plan.

(12) What action is he taking to avoid the same flaws occurring in the drafting of the master plan for Sydney Airport; if no action is being taken, why not.

Mr Anderson—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) Yes. The Government tabled its response to the recommendations of the Senate Inquiry into the Brisbane Airport Corporation Master Plan in the Senate on 16 May 2002. This is available on my Department’s website at: www.dotars.gov.au/transreg/apr_Senate_Inq_Brisbane_master_plan.htm.

(2) Yes.

(3) The Government’s current review of the Airports Act 1996 (the Act) will take into account its response to the aforementioned Senate inquiry.

(4) See answer to (3), above.

(5) In its response to Recommendation 3, the Government gave no commitment regarding amending the Act to include more prescriptive requirements for community consultation by airport owners and airport-lessee. The Government considered that the consultation requirements in sections 79 and 92 of the Act ensure that airport operators undertake a structured public consultation process as part of the master planning and major development planning processes. However, the Government in its response did undertake to develop a standard set of guidelines to promote a shared understanding of how consultation processes should be managed. These guidelines will be developed following the Government’s current review of the Act to ensure the guidelines are consistent with any other related outcomes arising from the current review.

(6) See answer to (5), above.

(7) A preliminary draft Master Plan, Sydney Airport Corporation Limited’s (SACL’s) proposed strategic plan for the development of the airport, was released for the required 90 day public consultation period on 1 August 2003. This process concluded on 29 October 2003. Any consultation process beyond the legislated requirements is a matter for SACL.

(8) In its response to Recommendation 6, the Government did not agree to amend the Act to require the inclusion of flight path information in draft master plans. The Government’s response was that these issues would be effected via amendment to regulations. These amendments are yet to be made as changes to the regulations will be developed following the Government’s current review of the Act to ensure the regulations are consistent with any other related outcomes arising from the current review.

(9) See answer to (7), above.

(10) As part of the process of corporatising Airservices Australia, the Government will review Airservices Australia’s regulatory functions to determine how they might be best undertaken in the future. This examination will take into account potential conflicts of interest and the need for any arrangements to separate commercial from regulatory functions.

To prevent any potential conflict occurring, Airservices Australia has initiated internal procedures to formalise the approach to such work. In February 2001 the Chief Executive Officer approved a modus operandi for handling environmental work associated with airport Master Plans. This involved a protocol being issued within the organisation. The protocol was sent to all business units on 2 April 2001 and is attached.
(11) The requirements for the draft Master Plan are set out in the Airports Act 1996. I am advised that the Senate Committee Inquiry into the Development of the Brisbane Airport Corporation Master Plan and the Government’s response have been brought to SACL’s attention.

(12) See answer to (11), above.

**Taxation: Employee Benefit Arrangements**

(Question No. 2014)

Ms Jann McFarlane asked the Treasurer, upon notice, on 5 June 2003:

(1) Further to his reply to question No. 1364 (Hansard, 13 May 2003, page 14226), is it the case that the amended assessments highlighted were issued incorrectly by the Australian Taxation Office (ATO).

(2) What measures does he intend to take to ensure that taxpayers are protected from incorrect assessments.

(3) In these cases is the ATO process in breach of the Taxpayers Charter.

(4) In respect of part (3) of question No. 1364, (a) what are the limitations on the ATO’s power to issue assessments, (b) what is the threshold of evidence that the ATO must achieve, and (c) did the ATO compile audit reports in respect of the incorrect assessments.

(5) Is the ATO obliged to prepare an Audit report before issuing an assessment.

(6) Why has the ATO issued incorrect assessments based on assumptions when it has the power to demand information from taxpayers.

(7) Is it the case that immediately after the ATO raises a tax assessment, the amount of the assessment including any amount for penalties and interest is automatically counted as revenue; if so, is it also the case that this system does not take into account actual collections or disputes.

(8) In respect of the 7,000 participants in Employee Benefit Arrangements identified in part (1) of the answer to question No. 1364, have these taxpayers been issued with multiple assessments; if so, can he confirm that some of these taxpayers have received as many as three different tax bills.

(9) Where taxpayers have received more than one assessment, have penalties been imposed on more than one tax bill.

Mr Costello—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) Refer to my response to Question No. 1364.

(2) The Commissioner of Taxation assures me that he has processes in place to safeguard taxpayers from incorrect assessments.

(3) No.

(4) The limitations on the ATO’s ability to amend assessments include statutory timeframes, and the requirement for the amendment to be made in good faith. The ATO is required to make a genuine estimate of taxable income when making a default assessment. However, the law provides opportunities for review. Audit reports have been prepared for all EBAs which have resulted in amended assessments.

(5) No.

(6) See answer to (4).

(7) No.

(8) Some, but not all, EBAs expose participants to a variety of taxing points and therefore participants in these types of arrangements would have received up to three different tax bills to different times.
taxpayers. The ATO has agreed to settle these disputes on one taxing point with appropriate penalties and interest.

(9) Where multiple assessments have been issued penalties would be reflected in the assessments if they were warranted.

**Barton Electorate: Program Funding**

(Question No. 2164)

Mr McClelland asked the Attorney-General, upon notice, on 11 August 2003:

(1) What programs have been introduced, continued or renewed by the Minister’s Department in the electoral division of Barton since March 1996.

(2) What grants and or benefits have been provided to individuals, businesses and organisations by the Minister’s Department in the electoral division of Barton since 1996.

Mr Ruddock—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

The Attorney-General’s Department administers the following legal assistance programs and schemes to which community organisations, businesses or individuals in the electoral division of Barton may be able to apply for funding.

**Legal Aid**

The Attorney-General’s Department administers the Commonwealth Legal Aid Program. Under this program Legal Aid New South Wales is funded to provide assistance for Commonwealth law matters. Legal Aid New South Wales has a regional office located at 3-5 Stapleton Ave, Sutherland through which individuals and organisations living in the electoral division of Barton can apply for assistance.

The Commonwealth Legal Aid Program provides assistance to individuals. The Commonwealth does not maintain statistical information on the operation of the program at a level of detail which would enable it to identify the number of individuals in the electoral division of Barton who have received funding through the program.

Financial information on the provision of Commonwealth funding through the Commonwealth legal aid program is maintained on a financial year basis and on a State-by-State basis. The Commonwealth provided $41.0m to Legal Aid New South Wales in 1996–1997, $31.1m in each of 1997–1998, 1998–1999 and 1999–2000, $33.7m in 2000–2001, $36.3m in 2001–2002, $38.9m in 2002-2003 and will provide $41.5m in 2003-2004. Some proportion of these funds may have been used to provide legal aid to individuals living in the electoral division of Barton.

**Community Legal Centres**

The Commonwealth funds over 120 community legal services across Australia to provide a range of legal and related services under the Community Legal Services Program. There are 30 community legal centres located in New South Wales providing generalist and/or specialist legal services to the community.

There is no community legal service located in the Barton electorate. However, it would be open for residents of that electorate to attend any other community legal service in the State. Four Centres provide State wide legal services which would be available to residents in the electorate: Women’s Legal Resource Centre, Welfare Rights Centre, Environmental Defender’s Office and New South Wales Disability Discrimination Legal Centre.
Family Relationships Services Program

The Family Relationships Services Program has provided family relationship counselling and mediation services in the electoral division of Barton since 1996 through a Relationships Australia outlet at Rockdale.

There is no information available to determine what funding is allocated directly to the Rockdale service outlet. However, in 2003-04 Relationships Australia will receive $1,299,591 to provide family relationship counselling and $235,018 to provide family relationship mediation services in NSW. Funding for the Rockdale outlet is included in these amounts.

Financial Assistance Schemes

The Attorney-General’s Department administers schemes for the provision of financial assistance for legal and associated costs. These schemes exist to provide legal or financial assistance in cases where legal aid is not generally available from legal aid commissions and where the circumstances give rise to a special Commonwealth interest. People and organisations in the electoral division of Barton can apply for assistance directly from the Commonwealth under these schemes.

The Department’s electronic financial information systems record information about the people to whom payments of financial assistance are made. In some cases, payments are made to the person who applied for the grant of assistance (the applicant); in other cases, payments are made to the applicant’s solicitor. Determining the address (and therefore the electorate) of every applicant on whose behalf payments were made to a solicitor would require a manual cross check of the Department’s paper files. This would be an expensive and time consuming undertaking, which could not be performed within the resources available without adversely affecting the work of the Family Law and Legal Assistance Division.

Furthermore, it has been a long-standing practice, endorsed by successive Attorneys-General, to treat applications for financial assistance in confidence and not to provide information in relation to individual applications.

Aviation: Sydney (Kingsford Smith) Airport

(Question No. 2189)

Mr Murphy asked the Minister for Transport and Regional Services, upon notice, on 11 August 2003:

(1) Further to the answer to question No. 1725, (Hansard, 15 May 2003, page 14824) does the Airports Act 1996 preclude the inclusion of pricing surveillance provisions as a relevant part of the master plan for aviation and non-aviation pricing relating to Sydney Airport; if so, which parts of the Act apply.

(2) Does the Act preclude the inclusion of provisions accommodating new aircraft types resulting in revised noise contours, such as the A330 Airbus, as presented to the Sydney Airport Community Forum on 29 November 2002.

Mr Anderson—The answer to the honourable member’s questions is as follows:

(1)&(2) No.

Bankruptcies

(Question No. 2281)

Mr Murphy asked the Attorney-General, upon notice, on 18 August 2003:

(1) Further to part (3) of the answer to question No. 1714 (Hansard, 16 June 2003, page 16569) will he explain the intention of the Bankruptcy Act 1996?
(2) How was an individual able to be declared bankrupt on twelve occasions?
(3) What is the Government doing to ensure that this individual cannot be declared bankrupt a thirteenth time.

**Mr Ruddock**—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) In short, the intention of the Bankruptcy Act 1966 is to provide authority for the operation of the personal insolvency system which, in turn, is intended to provide an orderly means for creditors to recover, where possible, money owed to them and debtors to obtain relief from unmanageable debt so that they can again participate in the financial system.

(2) Until the commencement of the Bankruptcy Legislation Amendment Act 2002 on 5 May 2003, a completed debtor’s petition for bankruptcy that was accompanied by a completed statement of the debtor’s affairs had to be accepted by an Official Receiver. That is not the case any more.

(3) The Government will not be taking any specific action to ensure that this individual does not become bankrupt again. However, since the recent amendments to the Bankruptcy Act, the Official Receiver will not be compelled to accept a completed debtor’s petition from this person, should he present another. The acceptance or rejection of a future petition from this person will be at the discretion of the Official Receiver who will have regard to the information contained in the statement of affairs when determining if the petition amounts to an abuse of the bankruptcy system, for example, if it appeared that the debtor may be able to pay his debts within a reasonable time.

It is intended that giving Official Receivers the discretion to refuse a debtor’s petition will encourage debtors to consider their situation more seriously and, perhaps, take advantage of one of the alternatives to bankruptcy such as a debt agreement.

**Aviation: Security**

**(Question No. 2294)**

**Mr McClelland** asked the Minister representing the Minister for Justice and Customs, upon notice, on 19 August 2003:

(1) With which foreign governments has the Australian Government held discussions about the placement of security officers on international commercial flights.
(2) When did discussions commence with (a) the United States, (b) New Zealand, (c) Indonesia, and (d) Singapore.

**Mr Ruddock**—The Minister for Justice and Customs has provided the following answer to the honourable member’s question:

The Australian Government is committed to ensuring aviation security. The Government launched Australia’s domestic air security officer (ASO) program after the September 11 terrorist acts in New York and Washington. It needs to be borne in mind that these attacks were carried out by hijacking domestic US flights. The domestic ASO program has therefore been the Government’s priority. In expanding Australia’s ASO program to the international sphere, the Government has been conscious of the need to ensure that any foreign air marshals flying into Australia meet very high standards of training. Negotiating appropriate international arrangements also raises complex operational and legal issues, including the need to seek agreement of possible diversion countries.

(1) I would prefer not to identify foreign governments in addition to those in question 2 with which the Government has held discussions. The security of our aircraft is not assisted by making additional information public.

(2) (a) The Minister for Justice and Customs met with the head of the United States Transport Security Administration in September 2002 to discuss developing reciprocal arrangements for
the deployment of ASOs on international flights between Australia and the United States. Australian officials held technical discussions with United States officials in May and October 2003, to further progress matters. Reciprocal arrangements are close to being finalised.

(b) Australian and New Zealand officials held discussions in June 2002. Due to operational limitations concerning the clearance of firearms in New Zealand, this option has not progressed.

(c) Discussions with Indonesia commenced in November 2002. The Minister for Justice and Customs discussed extending Australia’s ASO program to Indonesia with Indonesian Ministers in December 2002. Australian officials continue to discuss the issue of ASOs with Indonesian officials, who have indicated that the issue needs to be discussed through their inter-agency processes first.

(d) The Minister for Justice and Customs met with Singapore’s Minister for Home Affairs in December 2002 to discuss developing reciprocal arrangements for the deployment of ASOs on international flights between Australia and Singapore. Australian officials met with Singaporean officials in February 2003 to further progress matters. Bilateral negotiations focusing on legal and operational matters occurred in Canberra during August 2003. Reciprocal arrangements are close to being finalised.

**Telstra: Fault Repairs**

*(Question No. 2300)*

Ms Jackson asked the Minister for Communications, Information Technology and the Arts, upon notice, on 19 August 2003:

1. How many complaints have been made to the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman in relation to the quality and time it takes Telstra to repair faults to the services it provides.
2. What is the average waiting time a client of Telstra can expect to wait for a fault to be repaired in one of the services Telstra provides.
3. Over the last 8 years what were the average waiting times for repairs of Telstra services in each year.
4. Is one of the causes for the increase in complaints the Government’s slashing of Telstra employees from 57,000 in 1998 to approximately 37,000; if not, to what does the Minister attribute the increase in complaints.
5. What is the Minister’s response to the concerns of a number of my constituents that the subcontracting of functions and the cutting of staff by Telstra, especially within repairs and maintenance sections, has increased the length of time taken to carry out repairs to services.
6. To what does the Minister attribute the increase in the number of complaints reported in relation to fault repairs by both Telstra (43,489) and the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman (3,099) in 2001-2002.
7. What is the average time a sub-contractor takes to repair a fault and how does this compare to the average time a Telstra employee takes to repair a fault.
8. Is the Minister aware of any reports or research studies that recommend the reduction of staffing levels and the expansion of sub-contract services in order to provide a higher standard of service and consumer satisfaction; if so, what are the reports or research studies and findings.
9. What steps is the Minister taking to respond to community concern about the time Telstra is taking to repair faults to its services.

**Mr Williams**—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:
(1) The Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman (TIO) has advised that in 2001-02 there were a total of 2,606 complaints to the TIO in relation to faults on Telstra’s terrestrial (landline) services. In 2002-03 this figure was reduced to 2,204.

(2) Telstra advises that its records do not enable calculation of the average waiting time for repair of a landline service. However, Telstra must comply with legislated standards of service performance, under the Government’s Customer Service Guarantee (CSG) scheme and the Universal Service Obligation (USO). Each sets out minimum performance standards for repair (and installation) of the standard telephone service. Telstra reports to the Australian Communications Authority (ACA) on compliance with these standards on a quarterly basis.

The maximum periods under the CSG and USO for repair of the standard telephone service are:
- in urban areas - by the end of first full working day after being notified of a fault;
- in rural areas - by the end of second full working day after being notified of a fault; and
- in remote areas - by the end of third full working day after being notified of a fault.

(3) Telstra’s performance in relation to these standards has improved since the CSG Standard was introduced in January 1998. Telstra has advised that it repaired approximately 70 percent of faults within the CSG timeframe in 1998, while the corresponding figure has commonly exceeded 90 percent since the September 2000 quarter.

Corresponding figures for the period prior to 1 July 1998 are not available from published reports. Figures from the ACA’s annual telecommunications performance reports indicate that the amounts Telstra has paid in CSG compensation have reduced over the period 1999-00 to 2001-02. In 1999-00 Telstra paid $2.64M, reducing to $2.29M in 2000-01 and $1.71M in 2001-02. The decrease in compensation is attributed by the ACA to an improvement in Telstra’s fault rectification performance.

(4) The TIO has advised that the number of complaints to the TIO about faults on Telstra’s landline services has fallen over the last three years.

Telstra has advised that staff levels and service performance are not positively related. Improved service performance has occurred despite staff reductions, due to increased efficiency and productivity gains in Telstra’s operations. For example, many faults can now be diagnosed and repaired over the phone or remotely from the customer, rather than requiring a field visit.

Telstra has indicated that any job reductions or sub-contracting of functions is managed so as not to undermine the company’s commitment to customer service.

(5) See answer to part (4).

(6) The TIO has advised that complaints to the TIO about faults in Telstra’s landline services fell by 11.7 percent in 2001-02.

Telstra has advised that the figure of 43, 489 relates to the total number of complaints about ‘faults’ received by Telstra in 2001-02. These include complaints about low Internet data speeds, mobile handset faults and a range of other issues unrelated to faults on Telstra’s landline services.

I am informed by Telstra that the level of complaints to Telstra in 2001-02 was significantly impacted by extensive bushfires and subsequent heavy rain in New South Wales during January and February 2002, resulting in extensive damage to network infrastructure. I am advised that this damage was associated with a significant increase in the number of fault complaints in the six months after the fires.
Telstra has also noted that the introduction of new products and services such as broadband Internet and MessageBank services can result in higher complaint numbers, until customers become familiar with their use.

(7) Telstra has advised that a comparison of these times would be inappropriate.

I am advised that Telstra is committed to ensuring that faults are repaired in appropriate timeframes, with continuous improvement in quality and productivity, regardless of whether faults are rectified by its internal workforce or sub-contractors.

(8) No.

(9) The Australian Government has developed a number of regulatory safeguards to ensure that if faults do occur, they are repaired in the shortest time possible. For this reason, when faults arise, repair timeframes apply under the USO and CSG. Under the CSG, the Government requires all telephone companies to meet fixed timeframes for the connection of the standard telephone service, the repair of faults and the attending of appointments. Where telephone companies fail to meet these timeframes they are required by law to make automatic compensation payments to customers. If faults take longer than five working days to repair, Telstra, as the universal service provider, is normally required to offer interim or alternative services.

The ACA has specific responsibility under the legislation for monitoring and reporting on compliance with the CSG and the USO.

As part of its response to the independent Regional Telecommunications Inquiry, the Government will further strengthen CSG compliance by ensuring that service providers give priority attention to cases of extreme CSG non-compliance, and that such cases are reported in a timely way to the ACA.

In addition, the Government has imposed stringent medical priority assistance requirements on Telstra by licence condition. Priority assistance arrangements require Telstra to repair faults and provide new connections to priority customers within 24 hours (or 48 hours in remote areas). Such assistance is available to all customers on request, subject to meeting eligibility criteria.

Regulatory Safeguards Attachment B

The following consumer safeguards are provided for under the Telecommunications Act or the Consumer Protection Act:

1. a Customer Service Guarantee (CSG) scheme, providing for payment of compensation to customers if a carriage service provider breaches performance standards in relation to timeliness of new service connections and fault rectification and the keeping of appointments with customers (Part 5 of the Consumer Protection Act);

2. a Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman (TIO) scheme, providing for all carriers and most carriage service providers to enter into, and comply with, a scheme for the investigation and resolution of complaints by customers about supply or refusal to supply telecommunications services (Part 6 of the Consumer Protection Act);

3. The Universal Service Obligation (USO) ensures that all people in Australia, wherever they reside or carry on business, have reasonable access, on an equitable basis, to: (a) standard telephone services (STS); (b) payphones; and (c) prescribed carriage services (none prescribed). The STS includes the option of a telephone handset and customer equipment for people with a disability. Under the untimed local call obligation (Part 4), residential STS customers must be offered the option of untimed local calls

4. Telstra, as the Universal Service Provider is required to offer interim services or solutions in a range of situations, for instance, where a fault cannot be fixed within 5 working days of being
reported. Interim service requirements apply only to Telstra, although providers may also choose to offer an interim or alternative service. Where a customer accepts the offer of an interim or alternative service, such as having their calls diverted to a mobile phone, providers subject to the CSG are considered to have fulfilled their obligation.

5. Priority assistance arrangements, given effect by a licence condition on Telstra, address the special needs of people who due to particular life-threatening medical conditions are especially reliant on access to a working phone service. Under the arrangements, Telstra must repair faults and provide new connections to priority customers within 24 hours (48 hours in remote areas). Telstra must also provide priority customers with enhanced fault repair for recurring and multiple faults, including comprehensive testing of the phone service if it has had multiple faults.

Immigration: Illegal Workers

(Question No. 2306)

Mr Danby asked the Attorney-General, upon notice, on 20 August 2003:

(1) For each of the years (a) 1996, (b) 1997, (c) 1998, (d) 1999, (e) 2000, (f) 2001, (g) 2002, and (h) 2003 to date, how many (i) women have been found working illegally in brothels in Australia, and (ii) how many were under 18 years of age.

(2) In respect of the women found working illegally in brothels in Australia, what categories of visas did they hold and what was the total number of visas in each category.

(3) How many raids on brothels have been undertaken by the Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs or the Australian Federal Police.

(4) For each of the years (a) 1996, (b) 1997, (c) 1998, (d) 1999, (e) 2000, (f) 2001, (g) 2002, and (h) 2003 to date, in how many brothels were women found to be working illegally.

(5) How many of the women referred to in part (1) were deported and what is the average length of time from arrest to deportation.

(6) Which countries did the women referred to in part (1) come from.

(7) How many of the women were interviewed in relation to possible offences committed by their employers.

(8) How many brothel owners and managers were (a) investigated for any breaches of the law, (b) charged, and (c) convicted as a result of raids in the period 1996 to date.

(9) In relation to the raid on the brothel in Melbourne on Monday 11 August 2003, were any managers or owners investigated or taken into custody in relation to sexual servitude or any other offence.

(10) How many brothel owners or managers have been convicted under Commonwealth sexual servitude legislation.

Mr Ruddock—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) The Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs (DIMIA) is the agency with responsibility for providing this information.

(2) DIMIA is the agency with responsibility for providing this information.

(3) As at 21 October 2003, there have been 7 occasions on which the AFP initiated search warrants on known brothels in relation to sexual servitude matters.

(Note: Occasions on which the AFP was requested to assist DIMIA on DIMIA Immigration Warrants have not been included.)

(4) DIMIA is the agency with responsibility for providing this information.
(5) DIMIA is the agency with responsibility for providing this information.
(6) DIMIA is the agency with responsibility for providing this information.
(7) DIMIA is the agency with responsibility for providing this information.
(8) The AFP is unable to comment with regard to State offences.

The AFP has not initiated any search warrants on brothels for sex servitude related matters in the Australian Capital Territory.

In relation to Commonwealth offences:

(a) Three brothel owners or managers have been investigated in relation to Slavery offences and Aid and Abet Slavery offences pursuant to Division 270, Commonwealth Criminal Code Act 1995.

(b) One brothel owner and two brothel managers have been charged as above and are currently before the courts.

(c) These matters are still before the courts.

Since the introduction of the Criminal Code Amendment (Slavery and Sexual Servitude) Act 1999, the AFP has investigated 37 matters. Of these, 15 matters remain open. Since June 2003, the AFP has made eight arrests relating to sexual slavery, servitude and deceptive recruiting. These charges were the first brought under the 1999 legislation. These matters are still before the courts.

(9) No. The owners and managers of the actual brothels raided were not accused of any offences by any of the females who were in breach of their visas. No slavery or sexual servitude victims were identified during this operation.

(10) None, however, as stated in the answer to question 8(c) above, one owner and two managers are currently facing charges and the matters are before the courts.

O’Connor Electorate: Envirofund Projects
(Question No. 2325)

Mr Kelvin Thomson asked the Minister for the Environment and Heritage, upon notice, on 8 September 2003:

What are the details of the 65 projects in the Federal electorate division of O’Connor which were funded from the Envirofund program in 2002-2003, including the (a) purpose, (b) objectives, (c) individuals/groups responsible for the administration of each project, and (d) the amount of funding allocated to each individual project.

Dr Kemp—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

Sixty nine Envirofund projects were approved in the Federal electorate division of O’Connor in the first Envirofund round during the 2002-2003 financial year. Details of each project from the first Envirofund round are provided in Attachment A.

A further thirty six projects were funded through the Drought Envirofund Round that took place during the 2002-2003 financial year. Details of each Drought Round project are provided in Attachment B.

Attachment A.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Electorate: O’Connor</th>
<th>Australian Government Envirofund 2002-2003 Round</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Project Title</td>
<td>Coastal Revegetation Providing Walks and Recreational Beach Areas</td>
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Applicant Name: Mrs Peggy Hodgson  
Address: PO Box 29  
GREEN HEAD WA 6514

This project will create a lookout area by extending walking trails and providing signage. It will revegetate a dune area and rehabilitate areas of human damage. Previous similar work has encouraged tourists to explore the delightful bays and beaches in the area.

**Project Title**: Eradication of Environmental Weeds in the Ravensthorpe Shire  
**Program**: Envirofund - Bushcare  
**Applicant**: Ravensthorpe Agricultural Initiative  
**C'wealth Funding**: $3,050.00

**Project ID**: 37158  
**Total Funding**: $16,230.00

Applicant Name: Mrs Jennifer Chambers  
Address: PO Box 292  
RAVENSTHORPE WA 6346

This project aims to eradicate environmental weeds in the Ravensthorpe Shire by assisting the local community in integrated weed control, improving community knowledge of environmental weeds and the skills to manage them, improving community confidence in best practice and controlling strategic infestations. Three environmental weeds will be targeted in this project African Box Thorn, Mossman River Grass and Victorian Ti Tree. Eradication will involve manual and mechanical removal and herbicide application.

**Project Title**: Restoration and Protection of Vegetation Corridors in the Phillips River Catchment  
**Program**: Envirofund - Bushcare  
**Applicant**: Phillips River Catchment Group Inc  
**C'wealth Funding**: $27,273.00

**Project ID**: 37159  
**Total Funding**: $143,571.00

Applicant Name: Mrs Jennifer Chambers  
Address: PO Box 292  
RAVENSTHORPE WA 6346

This project is stage one of implementing recommendations from the Phillips River Action Plan. The project aims to fence the major tributaries of the Phillips River and remnants forming corridors and to revegetate degraded areas. The Phillips River Catchment is 40% cleared. The main channel of the river is protected by a healthy and substantial corridor of natural vegetation. This project will link privately owned remnants to the river corridor, nature reserves and considerable road reserves in the catchment.

**Electorate**: O'Connor  
**Program**: Australian Government Envirofund 2002-2003 Round  
**Project Title**: Preserving Remnant Vegetation near Lake Cobham  
**Applicant**: Magenta Estate Pty Ltd  
**C'wealth Funding**: $29,970.00

**Project ID**: 37182  
**Total Funding**: $51,870.00
A total of 560ha of remnant vegetation near Lake Cobham will be covenanted and fenced off from surrounding farmland. The vegetation exists in two sections, which will be joined by revegetation corridor. The area contains the Declared Rare Flora species Metallic Flowered EREMOPHILLA (Eremophila veneta) and provides a likely habitat for the critically endangered Whorled Eremophila (Eremophila verticillata). Fencing this bushland will remove the threat of stock pressure, therefore protecting the habitat of these species. For this reason, our project will be of high public benefit.

**Project Title**: Protection of Malleefowl Habitat  
**Program**: Envirofund - Bushcare  
**Applicant**: Dillon and Company  
**C’wealth Funding**: $9,800.00  
**Other Funding**: $3,988.00  
**Total Funding**: $13,788.00

The aim is to conserve a 404ha area of remnant vegetation by fencing it off from stock. This will minimise degradation threats and allow the vegetation to regenerate. The area is connected by vegetation to Lake Biddy Nature Reserve (600 ha) and another area of remnant vegetation including Wattle Hill Nature Reserve and totalling 3,500 ha. Being mostly mallee woodland, the project area provides important habitat for the Mallee fowl, a vulnerable species which is known to exist in the area. For this reason, the project will be of high public benefit.

**Project Title**: Remnant Fencing Adjacent to Lake Magenta Nature Reserve  
**Program**: Envirofund - Bushcare  
**Applicant**: RG & JH Newman  
**C’wealth Funding**: $29,970.00  
**Other Funding**: $26,772.00  
**Total Funding**: $56,742.00

A total of 722 ha of remnant vegetation adjacent to Lake Magenta Nature Reserve will be fenced off to protect it from stock grazing pressure. The bushland will potentially provide safe habitat for the many rare species living in the reserve. This is a regionally significant project, as Lake Magenta Nature Reserve (107 615 ha) has been identified by the Avon Catchment Council as a priority area for the protection of remnant vegetation. The project also meets the regional objective of conserving intact natural saline ecosystems, as the bushland contains several lakes that are an important link to the Lake Magenta wetlands.

**Electorate**: O’Connor  
**Project Title**: Australian Government Envirofund 2002-2003 Round  
**Program**: Envirofund - Bushcare  
**Applicant**: RJ & LH Shalders  
**C’wealth Funding**: $29,958.00
A total of 120.5 ha of salmon gum woodland will be fenced off to prevent stock access and consequent degradation. At site 1, two areas of woodland will be joined by a 100m wide revegetation corridor, to allow free movement of wildlife between the woodlands. Site 2 consist of a strip of remnant salmon gum woodland along a drainage line, which will be fenced on both sides. This connects to 43 ha of bushland on the neighbouring farm which is already fenced off. These are significant stands of vegetation as there is little salmon gum woodland remaining in the area, making the project of high public benefit.

Program: Envirofund - Bushcare
Applicant: Australian Bush Heritage Fund Inc
C'wealth Funding: $20,364.00
Other Funding: $39,520.00
Total Funding: $59,884.00

A habitat corridor between Chereninup Creek Reserve (ABHF) and Peniup Nature Reserve (CALM) will be created through revegetating 80 hectares of cleared land on the ABHF reserve. The corridor will provide continuous habitat between Corackerup Nature Reserve, Chereninup Creek Reserve and Peniup Nature Reserve. These reserves are key properties in the Gondwana Link project which aims to link remnant habitat across the whole of southern WA. The corridor will provide opportunities for fauna to migrate between the three reserves and further afield as more of the Gondwana Link is established.

Program: Envirofund - Coastcare
Applicant: The Dongara Telecentre Inc.
C'wealth Funding: $3,435.00
Other Funding: $9,150.00
Total Funding: $12,585.00

Controlling public access and revegetating denuded areas with brushing of areas that are seriously eroded. Implementing boundary guidelines to encourage rehabilitation of the dune vegetation to its natural state.

Program: Envirofund - Bushcare
Applicant: Dandaragan Shire Land Conservation District Committee Inc.

Australian Government Envirofund 2002-2003 Round
Project Title: Survey, Protection and Restoration of the Lower Hill River
The Hill River is known for its unique biodiversity value and threatened flora species within the West Midlands. This project aims to protect and enhance a 10 km section of the lower Hill River linking reserve areas, vested in CALM and the Shire of Dandaragan, with remnants in private ownership. 17.5 km of fencing will be erected to augment existing fencing on some of the private properties to protect the 10 km section of the Lower Hill from stock and vehicular access. Prior to fencing, re-survey work will be conducted to ascertain property boundaries adjacent to the Hill River and the Hill River Nature Reserve is willing to enter into a covenant agreement to provide extra protection to this area. Degraded foreshore areas within the project boundary have been identified for restoration work such as tree planting. This project will demonstrate to the community of the Hill that on-ground activities are achievable and hence encourage the Hill River Catchment Group to become active again, with a view to extending protection of the Hill River eastwards to the Brand Highway.

Establish a multi-site nursery of Native Grass Species, with the aim to increase the extent of perennial grassed landscapes, as part of a strategic plan for conservation farming.

This project site is located towards the higher portion of the catchment. The project consists of fencing off and revegetating the waterways that pass through the proponents’ property with local native species. This will prevent stock access, act as a buffer and reduce soil erosion and gullying of the waterway. Interlinked with the protection of the waterway is the joining of the existing remnants that are found throughout the property. This project will address part of the proponent’s total farm plan and will join 10.1 ha of remnant vegetation with 20.5 ha of revegetation. The proponent will also be entering into a voluntary agreement to protect the area for the future. This linking process will form substantial corridors that will be used by the fauna in the immediate area.
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</tbody>
</table>

The project will address conservation actions identified in the National Recovery Plan for Malleefowl (Benshemesh). It will establish a 2002/3 monitoring project to identify active malleefowl mounds in 5 sites (1000 ha). It will compare breeding numbers to other national sites and provide results to the National Malleefowl Recovery Team survey data base. It will disseminate project results to the community through the Malleefowl Matter newsletter and farmer’s ‘guideline to conservation’ brochure.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project Title</th>
<th>Stage Two Malleefowl Corridor Link to Aboriginal Reserve</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Program</td>
<td>Envirofund - Bushcare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applicant</td>
<td>Malleefowl Preservation Group Inc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C'wealth Funding</td>
<td>$25,712.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Funding</td>
<td>$110,180.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Funding</td>
<td>$135,892.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project ID</td>
<td>37490</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applicant Name</td>
<td>Ms Susanne Dennings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Address</td>
<td>PO BOX 29 ONGERUP WA 6336</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To complete Stage 2 corridor as part of a strategic wildlife corridor network detailed below:- State 1 - 21 kms across 7 farms completed 1995 (map attached). Stage 2 - this application (see enclosed map) linking the Foster Road breeding remnant and Stage 1 to the Mindarabin Nature Reserve managed by the Gnowangerup Aboriginal Corporation. Stage 3 - application to be submitted by Kent LCDC - link to Lake Magenta Reserve and Macro Corridor network.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project Title</th>
<th>Protecting and Connecting Burrs Bush</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Program</td>
<td>Envirofund - Bushcare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applicant</td>
<td>RJ and VJ York</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C'wealth Funding</td>
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<td>Project ID</td>
<td>37521</td>
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<tr>
<td>Applicant Name</td>
<td>Mrs Jayne York</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Address</td>
<td>RMB 232 TAMMIN WA 6409</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Burrs Bush sits on recently purchased land and has been identified as remnant worth protecting. This remnant is made up of two pockets of bush one of 18.6 ha and the other being 9.1 ha. It is currently unfenced with the central portion cropped and lightly grazed. This area is located at the top of the catchment and sits adjacent to another fenced remnant of 25 ha. We plan to connect the 2 existing pieces of remnant by revegetating over 7 ha of land with local provenance species fence the entire area. A
creek line that runs from the southern corner of the remnant will be revegetated with local provenance species and fenced.

**Electorate:** O’Connor  
**Australian Government Envirofund 2002-2003 Round**  
**Project Title:** Reserving Land Degradation in Meckering  
**Program:** Envirofund - Landcare  
**Applicant:** Morrell Family Trust  
**C’wealth Funding:** $6,818.00  
**Sponsor:** Other Funding $15,100.00  
**Project ID:** 37526  
**Total Funding:** $21,918.00  
**Applicant Name:** Mr Greg Morrell  
**Address:** PO BOX 55  
MECKERING WA 6405

In a recent trial frequency domain EM survey a site east of Meckering was identified where salinity was impacting on farmland and the Great Eastern Highway (SLK 135.63) from south of the road. High conductivities were measured in the top one metre despite the road having been recently raised on an embankment. The landholder has already carried out substantial tree planting in this area to try to reduce the level of the watertable. Salinity is also spreading in the catchment south of the road. It is considered that the site will be an ideal location for a demonstration site on a trial basis for a pumping operation to reclaim the farmland and minimise salinity damage to the road. Palaeochannel sediments were suspected to be present which would be ideal for sustained pumping. Geographical surveys carried out by students from Curtin University Geophysics Department under the direction of Greg Street - Senior Lecturer identified a proposed pumping site.

**Project Title:** Creating Creekline Corridors in Meckering  
**Program:** Envirofund - Bushcare  
**Applicant:** NP & JM Burges  
**C’wealth Funding:** $8,877.00  
**Sponsor:** Other Funding $19,710.00  
**Project ID:** 37532  
**Total Funding:** $28,587.00  
**Applicant Name:** Mr Neville Burges  
**Address:** Goormalling Road PO BOX 88  
MECKERING WA 6405

The project will revegetate 4 creeklines which will be the last step in connecting 2 bush remnants. One side of the creekline will be fenced, the other side has fencing in place restricting stock access already. The project will also plant a block of 9ha which will link to a 25ha block of recently revegetated farmland which links up to the remnants. Local tree and understory species will be used for revegetating the creeklines and the block planting. By using local native flora the project will create corridors for local fauna to move between the 2 remnants and increase the food source for them.

**Project Title:** Protecting the Tangled Wattle - Acacia Volubilis  
**Program:** Envirofund - Bushcare  
**Applicant:** Christison & Son  
**C’wealth Funding:** $2,182.00  
**Sponsor:** Rushland Pty Ltd  
**Other Funding:** $4,904.00  
**Project ID:** 37537  
**Total Funding:** $7,086.00  
**Applicant Name:** Mrs Faye Christison

__________________________________________

**QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**
To ensure the survival of Acacia volubilis - tangled wattle, by erecting a fence around a remnant that contains this species of declared rare fauna. The existing fence has now deteriorated to a large extent allowing stock to enter. We will be applying for a convenant to protect this area. The remnant is comprised mainly of Actinostrobus Areabius and a variety of different Grevilleas, which are in good condition. We will rehabilitate the open area in the middle of the remnant and Bushcare has advised that brushing will be the best technique to use to regenerate this area in view of wind erosion.

Project Title: Greenough River Foreshore Restoration Project No. 1
Program: Envirofund - Rivercare
Applicant: Greenough Land Conservation District Committee Inc.
Sponsor: Other Funding $31,812.00
Project ID: 37540
Total Funding $43,062.00
Applicant Name: Mrs Roseanne Oliveri
Address: PO Box 2274
GERALDTON WA 6531

The project aims to restore a section of degraded foreshore within the Greenough River Foreshore Reserve with volunteer effort from the community of the Lower Greenough. This project will have a high public benefit, as the section of foreshore being restored is part of well utilised passive walk trail funded by Trails West. The greatest public benefit will be raising community awareness about riverine values by demonstrating that management suggestions in the Greenough Foreshore Assessment Report (GRFAR) can be implemented to improve the condition of the Greenough River. The establishment of a high profile river restoration demonstration site will assist the LCDC in generating an interest, with the aim to involve landowners, within the Greenough District to adopt and implement the GRFAR published by the Water and Rivers Commission and partly funded by NHT.

Project Title: Extension of the Mid West Environment Centre into the Northern Agricultural Region
Program: Envirofund - Landcare
Applicant: Active Community Environmentalists
Sponsor: Other Funding $29,898.00
Project ID: 37546
Total Funding $40,716.00
Applicant Name: Ms Bronte Grant
Address: PO Box 1514
GERALDTON WA 6531

The project will construct a website for the Mid West Environment Centre, located in Geraldton WA, to service the northern agricultural region and provide essential communication links throughout the region.
This project aims to protect and enhance a unique corridor system that was retained when the property was originally cleared. Remnant vegetation has been left along most fence lines and rocky areas throughout the property totalling nearly 300 hectares (15% of the property). These areas require 54 kilometres of fencing to protect them. Funding has been secured for 28 kilometres, the landholder now requests materials for a further 12 kilometres. While many of the corridors strips are at least 40 metres wide, this project also aims to increase at least one section in width. 4 hectares will be direct seeded to achieve this.

Electorate: O'Connor  Australian Government Envirofund 2002-2003 Round

Project Title Management and Conservation of High Priority Wetlands, South Coast WA

Program Envirofund - Rivercare

Applicant Green Skills Inc.

C'wealth Funding $29,772.00

Other Funding $104,760.00

Total Funding $134,532.00

Applicant Name Mr Kevin Hopkinson

Address PO Box 525
ALBANY WA 6330

This project builds on the 1999-2002 NHT Regional Wetland program and will continue to promote the environmental, social and economic values and threats to regionally significant wetlands in priority areas of the region. This will be achieved by: * Developing and implementing Wetland Management Plans for wetlands identified as being Nationally or Regionally significant. The formation of community catchment groups will be encouraged to implement this process, with provision of seed funding to establish demonstration best practice fencing and revegetation sites. * Continuing established regional monitoring programs sampling 30 wetlands twice yearly. * Raise community awareness and promote wetland values to catchment groups, key landholders, community members and school children through information pamphlets, displays and workshops. * Collate agency resources, maps and data to develop regional GIS products.

Project Title Protecting and Linking Remnant Vegetation, Calingiri West, Victoria Plains, WA

Program Envirofund - Bushcare

Applicant Calingiri - New Norcia Land Conservation District Committee Inc.

Sponsor Carrah Farms

C'wealth Funding $25,782.00

Other Funding $10,712.00

Total Funding $36,494.00

Applicant Name Ms Sarah Mason

Address 154 Forrest Street
FREMANTLE WA 6160

Construct 17.2km of fencing to protect 164.5 ha of good quality remnant wandoo woodland. Protect the woodland for at least 10 years under a voluntary management agreement through the Land for Wildlife
(LFW) program. The remnants are registered in the LFW program, and through this the agreement will be designed and implemented. Future phases of the project include enhancing remnants by in-fill and buffer zone planting. Create a wildlife corridor linking the Bindoon Army Reserve and Rica Erickson Reserve with good quality farm and road remnants to Moganmoganing Nature Reserve and large remnants on the Benedictine Community farm near New Norcia. Involve community and LCDC members in monitoring, seed collecting and river restoration activities. The project will achieve protection of 164.5 ha of wandoo woodland, maintain the hydrological balance of the Fletcher Brook Catchment area, raise aware of the value of remnant vegetation, protect a valuable seed source for the Calingiri-New Norcia LCDC seed collecting group.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project Title</th>
<th>Strathalbyn and Glenhaven Nature Protection Plan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Program</td>
<td>Envirofund - Bushcare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applicant</td>
<td>David Bruce and Christine Anne Bolt</td>
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<tr>
<td>C'wealth Funding</td>
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<td>Other Funding</td>
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<td>Project ID</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applicant Name</td>
<td>Mr David Bolt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Address</td>
<td>PO BOX 8 CORRIGIN WA 6375</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The remnant vegetation that exists within the upper Bilbarin Catchment is in very good condition and should be protected and restored to maintain biodiversity integrity and to reduce recharge in the catchment. This revegetation and remnant vegetation protection project will protect and restore 20 hectares of remnant vegetation and re-establish 4 hectares of native vegetation on cleared areas within the Bilbarin catchment. The project will increase wildlife habitat and biodiversity values of the remnants, alleviate land degradation issues that threaten the catchment area, including surface soil erosion, groundwater recharge and rising watertables, compliment existing agricultural systems and contribute to sustainable agricultural systems.

**Electorate: O'Connor**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project Title</th>
<th>Homefield Revegetation Project</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Program</td>
<td>Envirofund - Rivercare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applicant</td>
<td>RE &amp; L Baker Trading Trust T/AS</td>
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<tr>
<td>C'wealth Funding</td>
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<td>Project ID</td>
<td>37567</td>
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<tr>
<td>Applicant Name</td>
<td>Mrs Lynette Baker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Address</td>
<td>‘Homefield’ BULLARING WA 6375</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This revegetation and creek line restoration project will protect and restore 2kn of a major drainage line within Bullaring Catchment. It will re-establish 9.5 hectares of native vegetation along the drainage line and on high recharge, unproductive areas within the catchment. The project will stabilise the waterway against erosion and increase water use. It will also protect and restore 1.5 hectares seriously affected by wind erosion. Both components of the project will increase wildlife habitat, alleviate land degradation issues that immediately threaten the catchment area, including surface soil erosion and groundwater recharge, compliment existing agricultural systems and contribute to sustainable agricultural systems.
The banks of Eungai Creek at Unkya Reserve are overgrown with invasive species and rubbish. Our aim is to clear the bank of all but larger native trees, revegetate the area with native species to attract flora and fauna and re-establish the bank to minimise future erosion by flooding.

The aim of this project is to protect 12.65ha of wetlands in the Lake Chinocup Catchment from stock and allow the regeneration of 2ha of remnant vegetation. The edge of Joshua’s Wetland will be re-planted with 3000 indigenous seedlings and will be protected by 4km of fencing which incorporates the 2ha of remnant vegetation. This project will be a demonstration/trial on how to manage wetlands within the catchment. If successful this process could be used to protect and rehabilitate more of the natural wetlands occurring in the Lake Chinocup catchment. The project is implementing 50% of the actions suggested in the Lake Chinocup Integrated Catchment Management Plan for the improvement of the environment.

The long-term catchment plan of the South Mortlock Catchment group is to revegetate the headwaters and tributaries of the South Mortlock River. In order to meet this objective, the group has already
planted in excess of half a million trees in 12 years. In the next phase the group proposes to continue the on-going revegetation of the South Mortlock River system by linking previously revegetated areas and remnant vegetation into corridors at 24 strategic sites. By revegetating these links, it is expected that the resulting corridors will provide habitat for native fauna, re-establish native flora communities, thus enhancing the biodiversity of the South Mortlock Catchment. In the longer term, it is hoped that rehabilitation of soil erosion and soils affected by salt encroachment will extend beyond the local sites to benefit the catchment as a whole.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project Title</th>
<th>Condenup/Mt Clarence and Watenup/ Mt Adelaide Reserve Urban Bushland Conservation Project</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Program</td>
<td>Envirofund - Bushcare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applicant</td>
<td>Bushcarers Group (WA) Inc</td>
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<tr>
<td>C'wealth Funding</td>
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<td>Project ID</td>
<td>37588</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applicant Name</td>
<td>Mr Ryan Munro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Address</td>
<td>221 York Street, ALBANY WA 6330</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This project will aid in the implementation of the community developed Condenup/Mt Clarence and Watenup/ Mt Adelaide Management Plans. It will endeavour to protect and enhance biodiversity, protect the habitats of local honey possums and endangered ringtail possum populations by planting native vegetation in degraded areas, bushland regeneration and controlling the spread of dieback. It will also increase community awareness and skills in bushland conservation by providing improved public access and environmental education. It is also important to note that this project will benefit other bushland areas throughout the urban zone through training and network in the community.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project Title</th>
<th>Protection of Elyaring Brook</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Program</td>
<td>Envirofund - Bushcare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applicant</td>
<td>PB and SC Glatz and Co</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C'wealth Funding</td>
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<td>Other Funding</td>
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<td>Total Funding</td>
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<td>Project ID</td>
<td>37589</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applicant Name</td>
<td>Miss Vanessa Malcolm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Address</td>
<td>C/- PO Box 111, DOWERIN WA 6461</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This project is made up of two sites which are both located on or near Elyaring Brook. Elyaring Brook feeds into the Mortlock River, which is located in the Avon Basin. The first site is a creek line, which covers an approximate area of 51 ha. The area that surrounds this creek is classified as high recharge due to the soil types, therefore causing areas of waterlogging and an increase in salinity in the area. Within the 51 ha, there is an area of 25 ha of remnant vegetation. Local native plants will be used to stabilise the area, increase water use, as well as create a corridor between the remnant vegetation and Elyaring Brook. The second site will exclude stock from an area of the Elyaring Brook, by fencing, thus protecting the unique vegetation communities within the area.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Electorate: O'Connor</th>
<th>Australian Government Envirofund 2002-2003 Round</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Project Title</td>
<td>Geraldton Community Nursery</td>
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<tr>
<td>Program</td>
<td>Envirofund - Bushcare</td>
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<tr>
<td>Applicant</td>
<td>Active Community Environmentalists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C'wealth Funding</td>
<td>$6,930.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Geraldton Community Nursery was established earlier this year to propagate and provide indigenous seedlings not readily available from local commercial nurseries for local revegetation projects using local volunteers. The Geraldton Community Nursery aims to expand next year, the annual target production is 10,000 seedlings for 2003, most of which will be planted out by group members. As the Geraldton Community Nursery is not a commercial venture, ACE submits this Envirofund application to subsidise some materials costs for next years propagation. However, a major component of this application is to increase community awareness about our local indigenous coastal and riverine flora and endemic weeds that threaten biodiversity.

Project Title: Implementing the Protection Priority Listed Remnants in the Chinocup Catchment
Program: Envirofund - Bushcare
Applicant: Lake Chinocup Catchment Resource Management Committee
Sponsor: C’wealth Funding $29,960.00
Project ID: 37603
Total Funding $159,286.00

The aim of this project is to implement the protection of priority listed remnants in the Lake Chinocup Catchment. The priority list will be achieved by September 2002 in consultation with CALM and was worked on in conjunction with the Department of Environmental Protection before it was disbanded earlier this year. A draft list of priority remnants has been attached to this document. The remnants will be fenced and protected through covenanting where possible. This project addresses the Environmental Improvements outlined in the Lake Chinocup Integrated Catchment Plan (December 1999).

Project Title: Linking Vegetation Priority Systems across Yarragin Sub-Catchment
Program: Envirofund - Bushcare
Applicant: Knungomen Pty Ltd
Sponsor: C’wealth Funding $9,693.00
Project ID: 37606
Total Funding $32,175.00

The project aims to conserve biodiversity by linking high quality remnant vegetation systems from a 378ha CALM reserve to 2062ha Billyacatting Hill Nature Reserve (Map 2) by incorporating 1011ha of diverse remnant vegetative granite outcrops, Salmon Gum woodlands and covenanted York Gum woodland on private property. The project will link and enhance remnant vegetation and plant understorey in existing revegetation areas to provide habitat and corridors for wildlife movement. This project will complete the northern section of the Trayning LCDC Bush Corridor Project part of NHT funded project.
Monday, 24 November 2003

**Electorate: O'Connor**

**Australian Government Envirofund 2002-2003 Round**

**Project Title** Watsonia and Woody Weed Control and Regeneration

**Program** Envirofund - Bushcare

**Applicant** Torbay Catchment Group

**C wealth Funding** $2,841.00

**Sponsor**

**Other Funding** $10,280.00

**Project ID** 37622

**Total Funding** $13,121.00

**Applicant Name** Mr Andrew Marshall

**Address**

RMB 9055

ALBANY WA 6330

This project aims to eliminate 12ha of Watsonia, 2ha of Taylorina and 1ha of Eastern States Wattles on public reserve as well as establishing 1ha of revegetation in a previously sprayed area to trial the re-establishment of local indigenous species. These weeds, particularly the Watsonia represent an extremely serious threat to the biodiversity of the Torbay catchment and in particular threaten the viability of significant areas of native vegetation surrounding Lake Powel, Lake Manerup and Torbay Inlet itself. The weeds will be controlled using herbicides recommended by the Dept of Agriculture. These herbicides have been used for this purpose for at least 3 years now and monitoring has shown no negative impact on the environment at all. Through this project the group hopes to make a significant impact above and beyond what has been achieved on the spread of this serious environmental threat and use the group’s past success as well as this project to promote further action on the control of environmental weeds.

**Project Title** Revegetating Drainage Lines of Mingenew and Irwin

**Program** Envirofund - Rivercare

**Applicant** Mingenew-Irwin Group Inc

**C wealth Funding** $26,782.00

**Sponsor**

**Other Funding** $144,780.00

**Project ID** 37629

**Total Funding** $171,562.00

**Applicant Name** Mr Cameron Weeks

**Address**

PO Box 6

MINGENEW WA 6522

The project aims to continue the stabilisation and revegetation of drainage lines (flowing into the Irwin River) that has been occurring over the past 4 years. Farmers in the area will erect fences to exclude livestock and also plant trees where it has been deemed unlikely that natural regeneration will occur. Both the Irwin River proper and its tributaries are included in the program.

**Project Title** Protecting Remnant Vegetation in the Shires of Mingenew and Irwin

**Program** Envirofund - Bushcare

**Applicant** Mingenew-Irwin Group Inc

**C wealth Funding** $27,055.00

**Sponsor**

**Other Funding** $144,480.00

**Project ID** 37634

**Total Funding** $171,535.00

**Applicant Name** Mr Cameron Weeks

**Address**

PO Box 6

MINGENEW WA 6522

In this project it is proposed to continue the fencing of important areas of remnant vegetation in the Mingenew and Irwin Shires/LCDs. Farmers have identified priority areas for protection when develop-
ing farm plans (1991-1996) and have since begun to implement these plans. Considerable work has been carried out since 1997/98 but there is still much to be done, and with sheep numbers again building up on farm it is important to keep livestock out of these important areas. These remnant areas vary considerably from low scrub heath to areas of large river gums. Under this project some of these areas of remnants would have trees planted amongst them and others would have trees planted as buffers.

**Electorate: O’Connor**

**Australian Government Envirofund 2002-2003 Round**

**Project Title**: Revegetating Degraded Landscapes of Mingenew and Irwin

**Program**: Envirofund - Landcare

**Applicant**: Mingenew-Irwin Group Inc

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>C’wealth Funding</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$26,600.00</td>
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</table>

**Project Title**: Implementation of Priority on the Ground Works Identified in the Wilson Inlet Nutrient Reduction Action Plan

**Program**: Envirofund - Landcare

**Applicant**: Wilson Inlet Catchment Committee Inc.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>C’wealth Funding</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$29,541.00</td>
<td>$167,510.00</td>
<td>$197,051.00</td>
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</table>

**Project Title**: Fencing and Revegetation of Creekline in Peerambup-Narpunup Subcatchment

**Program**: Envirofund - Bushcare
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Applicant</th>
<th>Oyster Harbour Catchment Group Inc.</th>
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<tr>
<td>C’wealth Funding</td>
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<td>Total Funding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applicant Name</td>
<td>Mr Peter Speldewinde</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Address</td>
<td>PO Box 118 MOUNT BARKER SA 6324</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This project will fence and revegetate a section of waterway within the Peerambup-Narpunup Creek sub-catchment.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Electorate: O’Connor</th>
<th>Australian Government Envirofund 2002-2003 Round</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Project Title</td>
<td>Encouraging the Use of Low Recharge Farming Systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program</td>
<td>Envirofund - Landcare</td>
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<td>Applicant</td>
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<tr>
<td>Applicant Name</td>
<td>Mr Peter Speldewinde</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Address</td>
<td>PO Box 118 MOUNT BARKER SA 6324</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This project by the new sub-catchment group of Sanders Rd aims to encourage the development of sustainable and profitable management systems for application by landholders by subsidising the establishment of deep rooted perennial pastures.</td>
<td></td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Applicant</th>
<th>Nungarin Land Conservation District Committee Inc.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C’wealth Funding</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Other Funding</td>
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<tr>
<td>Project ID</td>
<td>Total Funding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applicant Name</td>
<td>Mr Barry Cornish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Address</td>
<td>PO Box 61 NUNGARIN WA 6490</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This project will rehabilitate and restore 2.4 km of waterways through revegetation using local native species and erecting a fence to protect the area that is to be rehabilitated. The project is situated on the upper slopes of the western side of the Talgomine Catchment. This is a part of the Talgomine Catchment plan and Biodiversity Corridor project that the group is actively working towards at present, so that they can better manage and preserve their remnants. The Biodiversity Corridor is a project that all catchment groups in the Nungarin Shire have undertaken to strategically link and enhance existing areas of revegetation and remnant vegetation on public and private land.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Project Title | Protecting Priority Vegetation Systems at Baandee |
| Program | Envirofund - Bushcare |
Gary Coumbe has 80 ha of very good quality remnant vegetation on his property. Sheep have not been a part of the farming system on the property for numerous years. Gary now needs to run sheep on this section of his farm, therefore this remnant vegetation is at threat from grazing. Instead Gary wishes to erect 10.5 km of fencing, so that they remain good quality remnants and place them under covenant. he believes that by doing this he can better manage and protect the existing remnant vegetation on this property.

To fence off 31.25 hectares of healthy Banksia woodland remnant adjoining a further 17 hectares of already fenced Banksia woodland (at landowner’s expense) on Newmarket Farm and protect and enhance the combined areas’ (approximately 48.25 ha) conservation values under a perpetual covenant agreement. The Landowner is already in the process of negotiating a covenant agreement with the Department of Conservation and Land Management covenanting scheme. However because of the length of the process to address all legal and land management issues formalizing the agreement is still in the process of being completed. It is important to note that adjoining bushland to the south west across neighbouring properties are fenced off and form a conservation corridor linked to Wattening Nature Reserve and Wattening Springs remnant bushland located on private property.

There are very few freshwater lakes left in the wheat belt, as much of those that are left have gone saline due to clearing of the land and the mobility of salt crystals. This project involves four of these lakes that are situated in sandplain country within the Avon Basin. This project will consist of a variety of sites, with the aim to preserve this particular ecosystem. The project aims to fence off the remaining
unfenced area of the ecosystem from stock, which includes 28.5 ha of intact remnant vegetation. The project also will fence and protect other existing remnants as well as part of a creek that flows into the system. In total 17 ha of land will be revegetated. By removing stock the project eliminates erosion and encourages natural regeneration.

**Project Title** Lake Seppings Access and Interpretation

**Program** Envirofund - Bushcare

**Applicant** Bushcarers Group (WA) Inc

**C'wealth Funding** $27,273.00

**Sponsor** Albany Bushcarers Group

**Other Funding** $115,280.00

**Project ID** 37661

**Total Funding** $142,553.00

** Applicant Name** Miss Melanie Price

**Address** 221 York Street

**ALBANY WA 6330**

This project will implement several recommendations of the Management Plan for Lake Seppings developed with the Albany Bushcare Group, the Friends of Lake Seppings, Green Skills and the City of Albany. It will create a Lake Seppings Circuit Trail, including a 150 m-length boardwalk running parallel to Golf Links Road, with paths and short boardwalks for the rest of the circuit. Inappropriate tracks will be identified, closed and rehabilitated. An interpretive signage strategy will be developed and implemented for the proposed Circuit Trail.

**Electorate: O'Connor**

**Australian Government Envirofund 2002-2003 Round**

**Project Title** Catchment-Wide Targeted Implementation of Best Management Practices in Waterways Rehabilitation

**Program** Envirofund - Rivercare

**Applicant** Torbay Catchment Group

**C'wealth Funding** $28,182.00

**Sponsor** Other Funding $113,860.00

**Project ID** 37675

**Total Funding** $142,042.00

**Applicant Name** Mr Andrew Marshall

**Address** RMB 9055

**ALBANY WA 6330**

The project aims to commence whole-of-catchment implementation of current best management practices (BMP’s) for waterways rehabilitation. The targeted areas for on-ground works have been identified in three Torbay sub-catchment river surveys (Marbelup Sub-catchment; Five and Seven Mile Creek Sub-catchment; and Torbay Inlet Drainage Area) and the Draft River Restoration Framework for Torbay Catchment. The BMP’s selected for implementation are to prioritise recommendations of the Policy Evaluation of the Wilson Inlet and Oyster harbour Catchments project (PEWOC). The fencing and revegetation of riparian buffers will be strategically located along drains and 1st and 2nd order streams in Torbay Catchment, as recommended in the PEWOC project, which will result in the most significant reduction in nutrient and sediment loads entering Lake Powell and Torbay Inlet. The project activities include: - Revegetation of 15 hectares of multi-storey riparian vegetation including fringing wetland shrubs, sedge and rush plants. - Fencing to protect 15 kilometres of priority drain and river foreshore area (total 30 kilometres of fencing). - Installation of 5 BMP stock/vehicle crossings throughout Torbay catchment at serious erosion points identified through the sub-catchment river surveys. - The above activities will achieve improved management of stock access to waterways, resulting in a measurable reduction of sediment and nutrient input to receiving Torbay Catchment waterbodies. - employment op-
opportunities will be provided by this project, through appropriate work scheme program eg ACTV Green Corp program.

**Project Title**  Protecting and Enhancing Jordina’s Granite Outcrops  
**Program**  Envirofund - Bushcare  
**Applicant**  Nungarin Land Conservation District Committee Inc  
**C’wealth Funding**  $7,127.00  
**Sponsor**  Envirofund - Bushcare  
**Other Funding**  $37,558.00  
**Total Funding**  $44,685.00  
**Project ID**  37699  
**Applicant Name**  Mr Geoff Dayman  
**Address**  PO Box 105  
**NUNGARIN WA 6490**

Geoff Dayman has 100 ha of good quality granite outcrop and associated vegetation on his farm. Of which 85 is not fenced and is at risk of further degradation from grazing. The vegetation is in good condition and he wishes to better manage and protect it for future generations by erecting 4.9 km of fencing. Geoff Dayman is an active and enthusiastic member of the Narkeening Catchment Group who have developed and are currently implementing there catchment plan. With in the catchment plan they have identified priority works which include protection of remnant vegetation and to minimise recharge. In conjunction with protecting the granite outcrops, Geoff is privately funding and implementing 6.1 km of earthworks and 30.5 ha of commercial vegetation to control surface water and increase the amount of perennial vegetation on his farm.

**Project Title**  Fencing Remnant Vegetation, Revegetation of Creek Line Including Planting Habitat Trees for Breeding Carnaby’s Black Cockatoos in the area  
**Program**  Envirofund - Bushcare  
**Applicant**  Joy and Barry Fowler, Kevin Fowler and Restbay Corporation Pty Ltd  
**C’wealth Funding**  $24,956.00  
**Sponsor**  Envirofund - Bushcare  
**Other Funding**  $11,380.00  
**Total Funding**  $36,336.00  
**Project ID**  37709  
**Applicant Name**  Barry and Joy Fowler  
**Address**  Glen Waddi  
**COOROW WA 6515**

Extensive fencing to protect native remnant vegetation, revegetate creek line which will link to bush corridors in the Marchagee & Waddy Forest catchments. Plant habitat trees for Carnaby’s Black Cockatoos breeding in the area. Land owner and the lessee’s are prepared to follow a management plan and the land owner is in the process of getting the remnant bushland covenanted for life ensuring protection for the bushland forever.

**Electorate: O’Connor**  Australian Government Envirofund 2002-2003 Round  
**Project Title**  Friends of Bluff Point Foreshore Kempton St Foreshore Revegetation Project  
**Program**  Envirofund - Coastcare  
**Applicant**  Active Community Environmentalists  
**C’wealth Funding**  $4,082.00  
**Sponsor**  Active Community Environmentalists  
**Other Funding**  $11,330.00  
**Total Funding**  $15,412.00  
**Project ID**  37747
Applicant Name: Mrs Victoria Casey
Address: Care 154 Kempton Street
GERALDTON WA 6530

To protect and increase the remnant dune vegetation by planting local plant species between a recently installed gravel barrier pathway and remnant dune vegetation; controlling access; weed eradication; educating and involving the local community.

Project Title: Reduce the Effects of Salinity on this Property, whilst Creating Wildlife Corridors and Habitat for Local Fauna
Program: Envirofund - Landcare
Applicant: Bevan Taylor
Sponsor: 
Project ID: 37757
Applicant Name: Mr Bevan Taylor
Address: PO Box 260
LAKE GRACE WA 6353

Salinity is increasingly becoming a problem on this property. The project involves revegetation and fence off some of the saline and water gaining areas of the farm (around 30ha), as well as revegetating a high recharge area of deep sand higher in the catchment (around 15 ha). The low lying area will be joined to remnant vegetation, creating a wildlife corridor. It is hoped that this revegetation project will lower the watertable and slow the spread of salinity, as well as expanding the area of natural vegetation on the farm.

Project Title: South Lake Buchan Catchment Plan
Program: Envirofund - Landcare
Applicant: Newdegate Land Conservation District Committee Inc.
Sponsor: 
Project ID: 37758
Applicant Name: Ms Rochelle Hams
Address: PO Box 163
NEWDEGATE WA 6355

The project aims to address salinity and wind and water erosion in the waterways leading to Lake Buchan. activities will include fencing off waterways and re-establishing native salt tolerant trees and ground cover. Wind erosion is also a problem on some sandy hilltops, which will be fenced off from stock and revegetation. A 10ha salt affected area will also be fenced off where landholders plan to work with the Productive Use and Rehabilitation of Saline Land (PURSL) group to establish new and innovative salt tolerant pastures.

Project Title: Billyacatting Creek Corridor Project
Program: Envirofund - Bushcare
Applicant: Nungarin Land Conservation District Committee
Sponsor: 

This project will link the 2062ha Billyacatting Hill Nature Reserve to the 57.7ha Karomin Hill Reserve through revegetation of 15.5ha using local native species to create a 40m wide corridor of vegetation between these reserves. The corridor will be situated along Billyacatting creek, a sub-catchment of the Kwelkan Catchment. The corridor will also link 263ha of remnant vegetation on private property that individual landholders have fenced. Earthworks will be implemented to control surface water along some parts of the creek. 1km of remnant vegetation along a section of the creek that has never been cleared will be fenced.

The main aim of the project is to link 5903 hectares of bush, by creating a corridor of bush from Bruce Rock townsite to Shackleton, by revegetating the unused railway reserve. The bush will be linked up locally, in an area which has been identified as having regionally significant vegetation (Erican-Yarding Nature Reserve vegetation complex). There is also a large strip of vegetation to the north-west of Shackleton, which includes the Shackleton Nature Reserve. This project aims to provide a continuous pathway between habitats/remnants, which in turn will provide habitat for flora and fauna and provide a pathway for the dispersal of plants and animals.

This project will involve the local landcare group and other volunteers in the removal of weed species in the Sandy Creek area; the protection of indigenous species, and revegetation. The site will be beautified to attract visitors. Visititation will be promoted through the local press.
The main aims of the project are to reduce recharge by revegetating under contour banks, revegetating rocky outcrop which is exacerbating a sandplain seep; to control discharge by direct seeding areas already being affected by rising watertable by a variety of plants which will germinate in the areas they are most suited to; revegetate creek lines; and revegetate a sandplain seep. By focusing on the two different aspects of rising watertables, it is hoped we will lower the watertables in the area and at least control the spread of secondary salinity in the catchment.

This project will make and distribute clay seedballs with the help of local groups and schools to trial their potential to revegetate areas in the community that are difficult to access using traditional revegetation methods. Involve the whole community to work with LCDC members, including youth and town groups and wider community to help develop the project. Monitor sites (photo points, quadrats, soil samples for pH, EC). Work with existing projects, such as the Sustainable Seed Bank and Orchard project to enhance outcomes and share resources. Research and document success and challenges of creating and using seedballs in the region. Share knowledge through local, state and national media. Publish the results of the seedball trials in the form of local ‘Guide to revegetation using seedballs’.

This project will identify a route(s) for viewing a number of sites of environmental interest, such as revegetation projects, stands of remnant vegetation and sustainable agriculture trials. It will produce brochures and an audio guide (CD/tape for in-car use) to illustrate route options and outline the history of landcare in the area. It will erect signs along the route identifying sites of interest, funding sources, issues and successes, as well as where to go for more information.
Electorate: O'Connor

Project Title | Lake Tunney Catchment Revegetation
---|---
Program | Envirofund - Rivercare
Applicant | Newdegate Land Conservation District Committee Inc.
Sponsor | Other Funding $73,780.00
Project ID | Total Funding $103,780.00
Applicant Name | Ms Rochelle Hams
Address | PO Box 163 NEWDEGATE WA 6355

To continue to improve the environs of the Campaspe by completing weed removal, establishing and protecting local plants in order to create better habitat for land and aquatic life-better biodiversity.

Project Title | WA Southern Farm Forestry and Commercialisation of Local Plants Program
---|---
Program | Envirofund - Landcare
Applicant | Green Skills Inc.
Sponsor | Other Funding $121,060.00
Project ID | Total Funding $141,370.00
Applicant Name | Mr Basil Schur
Address | PO Box 577 DENMARK WA 6333

Green Skills plans to progress with the next stage of farm forestry (including the commercialisation of WA perennial plant species) and its development in the south coast regions of WA in 2002-2003 and beyond. Green Skills will provide landholders with labour, advice and support to establish demonstration and trial sites.

Project Title | The Mills Lake Catchment Remnant Protection and Biological Corridor Project
---|---
Program | Envirofund - Bushcare
Applicant | Gnowangerup Land Conservation District Committee Inc.
Sponsor | Other Funding $63,210.00
Project ID | Total Funding $86,896.00
Applicant Name | Mr Travis Drysdale
Address | PO Box 27 BORDEN WA 6338

This project will provide a coordinated approach to assist catchment members to protect the vegetative buffer that surrounds the many wetlands within this catchment. Native seedlings will be established to widen and improve this vegetative buffer. W drains have been constructed to link the lakes and direct freshwater surface runoff into the lakes. The landholders intend to fence and revegetate both sides of these drains including fresh watercourses to act as wildlife corridors. Further fencing and revegetation works will be incorporated to protect and link isolated remnant vegetation.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Electorate: O'Connor</th>
<th>Australian Government Envirolfund 2002-2003 Round</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Project Title</strong></td>
<td>Bush Corridors in Coblinine River Eastern Catchments Organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Program</strong></td>
<td>Envirolfund - Landcare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Applicant</strong></td>
<td>Katanning Land Conservation District Committee Inc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>C’wealth Funding</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Total Funding</strong></td>
<td>$186,155.00</td>
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The project will continue the fencing and revegetation of waterways and begin the establishment of deep-rooted perennials and saltland pastures to improve the productivity of saline land in the eastern subcatchments of the Coblinine River Catchment - Jinka’s Hill, Datatine, Rockwell and Badgepup. The fencing and revegetation will stabilise waterways and provide corridors for movement of native fauna. These corridors will be designed to link bush remnants and revegetated waterways where possible. Deep-rooted perennials will reduce groundwater recharge, while improving the productivity of marginal farmland.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Project Title</strong></th>
<th>Restoring and Revegetating Coblinine Catchment Creeklines, Nyabing, Western Australia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Program</strong></td>
<td>Envirolfund - Rivercare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Applicant</strong></td>
<td>Katanning Land Conservation District Committee Inc.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>C’wealth Funding</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Funding</strong></td>
<td>$123,540.00</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The project is aiming to revegetate and protect 41.6ha of waterways in the Coblinine River Catchment. This will involve planting 50,000 indigenous seedlings, 12kg of direct seeding and the construction of 10km of fencing over the following 4 sub catchments: Nyabing Creek, Wolyaming, Wallacup, and Gnowanellup. The goal is to extend the vegetated area in the eastern part of the Coblinine river Catchment and increase the length of corridor habitat for movement of native fauna. Water management practices are being encouraged and the stabilisation of waterways for orderly water discharge is necessary.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Project Title</strong></th>
<th>Habitat Corridors and Revegetation of Saline Land in Western Coblinine</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Program</strong></td>
<td>Envirolfund - Landcare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Applicant</strong></td>
<td>Katanning Land Conservation District Committee Inc.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>C’wealth Funding</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Total Funding</strong></td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Project Title</strong></th>
<th>Habitat Corridors and Revegetation of Saline Land in Western Coblinine</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Applicant</strong></td>
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<td><strong>C’wealth Funding</strong></td>
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<td>$103,223.00</td>
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QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
The project will extend the fencing and revegetation of waterways and begin the establishment of deep-rooted perennials and saltland pastures in the western sub catchments of the Coblinine River - John’s Well, Bellakin Hill, Duping Creek and North Ewlyamartup. The fencing and revegetation will stabilise waterways and extend conservation corridors, linking remnant bush and revegetated waterways where possible for the movement of native fauna. Deep-rooted perennials will reduce groundwater charge, giving the dual effect of reducing waterlogging in existing remnant bush and improving the productivity of farmland.

**Electorate: O'Connor**

**Project Title:** Coyrecup Lake Catchments Revegetation Organisation  
**Program:** Envirofund - Landcare  
**Applicant:** Katanning Land Conservation District Committee Inc.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>C'wealth Funding</strong></th>
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**Project ID:** 38554

<table>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Applicant Name</strong></th>
<th>Mrs Jill Richardson</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Address</strong></td>
<td>PO BOX 803, KATANING WA 6317</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This project will allow traditional owners of Quandamooka to restore a degraded foreshore area of Bummeira (Brown Lake), a culturally significant lake on North Stradbroke island and provide interpretative and educational signage as a management and cultural educational aid to help protect and promote Bummeira’s cultural and environmental integrity. Activities include replacing rock and concrete on the foreshore with sand; implementation of erosion control strategies; and development and placement of educational and interpretative signs. A thorough consultation process for the project with the aboriginal and wider community is a key element. The project will rehabilitate the degraded foreshore of the lake at the boat access, inform visitors of its cultural and ecological importance and encourage appropriate visitor practices.

**Project Title:** Demonstrating and Evaluating Innovative Paddock-scale Systems Which Reduce Groundwater Recharge and Improve Farm Profitability  
**Program:** Envirofund - Landcare  
**Applicant:** W.C. Diamond and Co.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>C'wealth Funding</strong></th>
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**Project ID:** 38637

<table>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Applicant Name</strong></th>
<th>Mr Kim Diamond</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Address</strong></td>
<td>PO Box 470, MUNDARING WA 6073</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This project will look at the physical Characteristics of the ORIA’s 160Kms drainage system to identify the following: Where tail water can be efficiently recycled out of the drainage systems for further on farm use. Where artificial wetland systems can be established within the drainage systems to reduce the off farm movement of contaminants. What and how wildlife utilises the drainage system. Conceptual designs of infrastructure. This is the first component of a wider project that will use the information from this project to design and build the required infrastructure.
### Project Title: Arthur River Tributary Protection Project
**Program:** Enviropfund - Rivercare  
**Applicant:** West Arthur Land Conservation District Committee  
**C'wealth Funding:** $23,705.00  
**Sponsor:** Other Funding $67,374.00  
**Total Funding:** $91,079.00  
**Project ID:** 38666  
**Applicant Name:** Ms Karen McKeough  
**Address:** 27 Burrowes Street DARKAN WA 6392  

This project will revegetate and fence 6 tributaries that run directly into the Arthur river. The creek lines are currently supporting some large trees but little else. They are degraded, waterlogged, becoming saline and suffering from water erosion. The area will be revegetated with native vegetation, including understorey and larger trees. Revegetating the area will increase water usage and reduce the threat of waterlogging and salinity. It will assist with stabilising the soil and therefore reduce erosion. The replanting of species native to the area will create new habitat for native fauna. Some sections of the Arthur River will also be fenced off to exclude stock.

### Electorate: O'Connor

**Project Title:** Australian Government Enviropfund 2002-2003 Round Mount Harris Catchment Creek line Rehabilitation Project  
**Program:** Enviropfund - Bushcare  
**Applicant:** West Arthur Land Conservation District Committee  
**C'wealth Funding:** $5,000.00  
**Sponsor:** Other Funding $12,220.00  
**Total Funding:** $17,220.00  
**Project ID:** 38672  
**Applicant Name:** Ms Karen McKeough  
**Address:** 27 Burrowes Street DARKAN WA 6392  

The creek runs through three properties. One landholder has already fenced and revegetated his section now the other two landholders wish to complete the project. To do this the two landholders need to fence and revegetate a tributary of the Hillman River and also control recharge by revegetating a 5ha plot above the creek line. The creek line is currently supporting some large trees but little else. It is degraded, waterlogged and becoming saline. With minimal existing vegetation the creek line is also suffering from water erosion. The area will be revegetated with native vegetation, including both understorey and larger trees. Revegetating the area will increase water use, reducing the threat of waterlogging and salinity. It will assist with stabilising the soil and therefore reduce erosion. The replanting of species native to the area will create new habitat for native fauna.

### Project Title: Coastal Rehabilitation Training at Degraded Coastal Locations
**Program:** Enviropfund - Coastcare  
**Applicant:** South Coast Management Group  
**C'wealth Funding:** $12,273.00  
**Sponsor:** Other Funding $54,900.00  
**Total Funding:** $67,173.00  
**Project ID:** 38682  
**Applicant Name:** Ms Elaine Siemer
The project aim is to develop a free training course which can be delivered by an experienced professional over a two day period and which will have direct on ground outcomes and benefits for selected degraded coastal locations. South Coast Management Group understands there is a need to train and educate local government officers and community members in coastal rehabilitation and revegetation methods. The officers and community members who take part will be in a stronger position to undertake further rehabilitation works in their areas.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project Title</th>
<th>Public Planting Days to Revegetate Degraded Dune Environments</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Applicant</td>
<td>South Coast Management Group</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sponsor</td>
<td>Envirofund - Coastcare</td>
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<tr>
<td>C’wealth Funding</td>
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<td>Total Funding</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applicant Name</td>
<td>Ms Elaine Siemer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Address</td>
<td>c/- 120 Albany Highway</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ALBANY WA 6330</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A large number of seedlings will be purchased for the winter of 2003. These seedlings will be provided free to members of the public through advertised planting days at local beaches throughout the south coast region. The plants will be coastal natives indigenous to the areas where planting days occur. Members of the public will be given instructions on how to plant the seedlings and will be asked to care for the plants for a period of time after planting. This is a no-pressure method of engaging the public in revegetation works at popular but degraded coastal locations and will have direct on-ground outcomes. It is expected that one person may plant ten plants and that up to 1,000 people will become involved.

Attachment B.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Electorate: O’Connor</th>
<th>Drought Round</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Project Title</td>
<td>Reestablishment of Drought Affected Revegetation to Combat Creek Erosion within the Narkeening Catchment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program</td>
<td>Drought Envirofund - Bushcare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applicant</td>
<td>Nungarin Land Conservation District Committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>C’wealth Funding</td>
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<td>Total Funding</td>
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<tr>
<td>Applicant Name</td>
<td>Mr Gary Coumbe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Address</td>
<td>PO Box 105 NUNGARIN WA 6490</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This project will address the drought in the Nungarin Shire area. The drought conditions that led to the Nungarin Shire being declared an "Exceptional Circumstances" area has caused seedlings previously planted to fail. The replanting of 5000 native seedlings along the creek bed will help to restore native vegetation to the Narkeening Catchment and link the existing remnant native vegetation within the catchment area.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project Title</th>
<th>Woodland and Biodiversity Protection in the Upper Bonnie Rock Catchment, Mukinbudin</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Applicant</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Address</td>
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QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Drought Envirofund - Bushcare</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Applicant</td>
<td>Kim Graham</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C’wealth Funding</td>
<td>$4,400.00</td>
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<td>Sponsor</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Funding</td>
<td>$13,496.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applicant Name</td>
<td>Mr Kim Graham</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Address</td>
<td>Wandanning Road MUKINBUDIN WA 6479</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This project will fence 54 hectares of the Wandoo Woodland Breakaway Community, with 2.5 kilometres of fence. The site encompasses granite and gravel outcrop associations and mallee spanning two properties, with a structured canopy that supports an active Malleefowl population. By excluding stock we aim to protect the area for biodiversity conservation and implement best practice management.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project Title</td>
<td>Protection of Malleefowl Habitat and Woodland Biodiversity in the Shire of Mukinbudin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program</td>
<td>Drought Envirofund - Bushcare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applicant</td>
<td>David Graham</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C’wealth Funding</td>
<td>$12,788.00</td>
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<td>Project ID</td>
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<td>Total Funding</td>
<td>$39,456.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applicant Name</td>
<td>Mr Michael Davis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Address</td>
<td>RMB 4003 MUKINBUDIN WA 6479</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>This project will protect a 60 hectare rectangular block of remnant vegetation, using 2.2 kilometres of fencing. The block comprises York Gum woodlands, granite outcrops associated with Acacia shrubland and supports a wide range of plant and animal species, including the nationally vulnerable Malleefowl. The project will also move a stock watering point away from the remnant, and with 2200 plants revegetate 2ha with native species to rehabilitate the area surrounding the old watering point. A 25,000 litre tank and solar pump with 8 poly pipe rolls will be installed.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Electorate: O’Connor</td>
<td>Drought Round</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project Title</td>
<td>Strategic Revegetation in Dalwallinu, Perenjori and Other Drought Affected Communities, to Protect the Land from the Effects of Drought</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program</td>
<td>Drought Envirofund - Bushcare</td>
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<tr>
<td>Applicant</td>
<td>Liebe Group Inc.</td>
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<td>C’wealth Funding</td>
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<td>Other Funding</td>
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<td>Total Funding</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applicant Name</td>
<td>Mrs Amanda Just</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Address</td>
<td>PO Box 22 BUNTINE WA 6613</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>This project will re-establish native remnant vegetation, protect and stabilise erosion prone soils through revegetation, fence remnants and plant wind breaks, and re-establish trees that died during the drought. Local provenance species will be planted according to soil type and landscape position. A range of can-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
copy types will be used as this will increase the water use capacity and soil stabilisation qualities of the vegetation and will provide other environmental benefits such as habitat value.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project Title</th>
<th>Protected and Drought Recovery of the Manyutup Tributary of the Phillips River, Fitzgerald Biosphere Reserve, Ravensthorpe WA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Program</td>
<td>Drought Envirofund - Rivercare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applicant</td>
<td>Metz &amp; Co</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sponsor</td>
<td>Phillips River Catchment Group Inc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project ID</td>
<td>39475</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applicant Name</td>
<td>Mr Nigel Metz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Address</td>
<td>PO Box 51 RAVENSTHORPE WA 6346</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This project aims to protect in perpetuity over 200 hectares of very high conservation value riparian vegetation and adjoining woodlands, providing long term stability in this area of the Phillips River Catchment. These are key actions identified in the Phillips River Action Plan (Waters and Rivers Commission, 2002). Much of this area is adjoining unallocated crown lands and other uncleared bush contributing significantly to the bush corridor system within the internationally significant Fitzgerald Biosphere Reserve. Under the current drought conditions, the stocking pressures on these areas of vegetation have become more severe, and urgent fencing for protection from stock is critical for its long-term viability.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project Title</th>
<th>Fencing Off Priority Remnant Vegetation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Program</td>
<td>Drought Envirofund - Bushcare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applicant</td>
<td>GB &amp; SL &amp; S &amp; JA Walsh Family Partnership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sponsor</td>
<td>Other Funding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project ID</td>
<td>39587</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applicant Name</td>
<td>Mrs Sam Walsh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Address</td>
<td>PO Box 71 NEWDEGATE WA 6355</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This project will fence off 6.7 hectares of salmon gum woodland along with an adjoining 1.3 km long mallee corridor to maximise the biodiversity value of the farm. The fencing will exclude stock and allow the vegetation to regenerate by protecting understorey shrubs and emerging seedlings.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Electorate: O’Connor</th>
<th>Drought Round</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Project Title</td>
<td>Lake Walker Recovery Project, Stage 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program</td>
<td>Drought Envirofund - Bushcare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applicant</td>
<td>Narembeen Land Conservation District Committee Inc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sponsor</td>
<td>Other Funding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project ID</td>
<td>39591</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applicant Name</td>
<td>Mr Stephen Fry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Address</td>
<td>PO Box 299 NAREMBEEN WA 6369</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This project will add to existing revegetation to assist with recovery of Lake Walker.
Project Title: Glenhaven Erosion Control Project  
Program: Drought Envirofund - Landcare  
Applicant: David and Christine Bolt  
C'wealth Funding: $4,000.00  
Sponsor:  
Other Funding: $9,200.00  
Project ID: 39611  
Total Funding: $13,200.00  
Applicant Name: Mr David Bolt  
Address: PO BOX 8, CORRIGIN WA 6375  

This project will plant 6 rows of 500 metres of trees along the sand seam across prevailing winds and 6 rows of 600 metres of trees along existing fences across prevailing winds. Both are on high wind blown country. The last site is a waterway and we will plant 6-8 rows of trees along 750 metres and fence the area, to exclude stock off the area.

Project Title: Fencing and Revegetating a Breakaway above the Pallinup River  
Program: Drought Envirofund - Rivercare  
Applicant: MK & PD Moir  
C'wealth Funding: $12,311.00  
Sponsor:  
Other Funding: $27,620.00  
Project ID: 39657  
Total Funding: $39,931.00  
Applicant Name: Mrs Penelope Moir  
Address: "Chillinup" RMB 380 Chillinup Road, BORDEN WA 6338  

This project will complete 6.1km of fencing to protect remnant vegetation and protect revegetation in about 60ha of degraded area in the Upper Slope Pallinup Siltstone Escarpment Breakaway. The breakaway corridor is linked to the extensive Pallinup River Vegetation Corridor which links the Stirling Range National Park to the South Coastal Reserve System. The revegetation of the breakaway corridor will reduce recharge and erosion of the river catchment. Protection from grazing pressure will assist the revegetation of the fragile breakaways following the stress of drought.

Electorate: O'Connor  
Drought Round  
Project Title: Coladie Recovery Project  
Program: Drought Envirofund - Landcare  
Applicant: RC & BA Smart  
C'wealth Funding: $27,273.00  
Sponsor:  
Other Funding: $63,926.00  
Project ID: 39658  
Total Funding: $91,199.00  
Applicant Name: Mr Robie Smart  
Address: PO Box 134, JERRAMUNGUP WA 6337  

This project will fence significant areas of remnant vegetation including corridors for wildlife between remnants. Degraded areas prone to salt encroachment and wind erosion will be fenced and revegetated as part of a broader plan to minimize the effect of the rising watertable. The plan involves managing large areas of perennial pastures which are predominantly lucerne. We have used lucerne on our properties since 1983 and will in the future. Documented figures of salt water levels, measured monthly since 1983, show water levels have stabilised over this period under our current management system.

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
This project will construct 4.5km of banks to intercept fresh runoff and subsurface seepage flows into dams and greatly enhance water harvesting (an additional 140ML/yr) to reduce drought impacts. The banks will also serve the dual purpose of reducing waterlogging problems over 110ha by cutting off the flow of water into areas of soil saturation and high water table. 3.3km of the new banks and 3.2km of existing banks will be vegetated with 4 rows of trees on the downhill side to improve biodiversity (bush corridors, refuges) and increase water use for downslope salinity control (9000 native seedlings). In addition, 44ha of remnant vegetation will be protected from stock and 3.2km of waterway will be protected by fencing and revegetation (7000 native seedlings). This will improve water quality in waterways by lowering saline water tables and protecting stream banks from erosion. 6000 native seedlings in an upslope area will reduce recharge and hence assist to lower water tables downstream.

The objectives of this project are to establish perennials back in the landscape and construct earthworks to manage water to improve water quality and lower water tables. It involves revegetation using native seedlings in areas to reduce recharge rates high in the landscape and near salinity-affected discharge areas to reduce evaporation and manage high water tables. Seepage interceptor banks and erosion/run off grade banks will be constructed to run fresh water away from saline waterways and into dams, thereby preserving fresh water supplies. The total area of revegetation will be 30ha and up to 237ha will be protected from waterlogging. Approximately 100 ML/yr will be harvested into dams to reduce waterlogging over an area of up to 97ha.
Monday, 24 November 2003

The objectives of this project are to increase biodiversity values and protect land in the catchment from waterlogging and the effects of salinity by reducing groundwater recharge rates across the landscape. Involving 3 landholders, the project will fence off remnant bush on granite ridges, promote native revegetation in sandy areas, and build seepage interceptor banks to run fresh water away from saline seeps and into dams, thereby preserving fresh water supplies. 13ha of native vegetation will be protected, and up to 58ha will be protected from waterlogging. Approximately 52ML per year will be harvested into dams.

**Project Title:** Waterway Protection in Woodanilling Shire

**Program:** Drought Envirofund - Rivercare

**Applicant:** Woodanilling Land Conservation District Committee

**C'wealth Funding:** $24,691.00

**Sponsor:** Shire of Woodanilling

**Other Funding:** $88,720.00

**Project ID:** 39719

**Total Funding:** $113,411.00

**Applicant Name:** Miss Sally Thomson

**Address:** PO Box 99

WOODANILLING WA 6316

This project will protect waterways in the Woodanilling Shire for improved water quality, and lower watertables. It mainly involves fencing of waterways to prevent stock access and revegetation to lower water tables. Seepage interceptor banks and erosion / runoff grade banks will be constructed to run fresh water away from saline waterways and into dams, thereby preserving fresh water supplies. The total length of waterway protected will be 7km and up to 210ha will be protected from waterlogging. Approximately 125ML per year will be harvested into dams.

**Project Title:** Land Protection in Queerfellows Catchment

**Program:** Drought Envirofund - Landcare

**Applicant:** Queerfellows Catchment Group

**C'wealth Funding:** $16,419.00

**Sponsor:** Shire Of Wagin

**Other Funding:** $52,260.00

**Project ID:** 39721

**Total Funding:** $68,679.00

**Applicant Name:** Miss Sally Thomson

**Address:** Community Agriculture Centre, 62 Tudhoe St / Po Box 311

WAGIN WA 6315

This project will protect agricultural land from excess water inflows (and resultant waterlogging and salinisation) and improve water quality for downstream users and environmental amenity. Fresh surface and subsurface water which would otherwise raise water tables in the valley floors will be harvested. On-farm drought tolerance will also be enhanced by increasing on-farm water supplies. Targeted areas will be fenced and revegetated. The total length of waterway protected will be 7.4km and up to 80ha will be protected from waterlogging. Approximately 90 ML/yr will be harvested into dams.

**Electorate:** O'Connor

**Project Title:** Revegetation in the Cancanning Catchment

**Program:** Drought Envirofund - Landcare

**Applicant:** Cancanning Catchment Group

**C'wealth Funding:** $12,400.00

**Sponsor:** Shire Of Wagin

**Other Funding:** $18,900.00

**Project Title:** Revegetation in the Cancanning Catchment

**Program:** Drought Envirofund - Landcare

**Applicant:** Cancanning Catchment Group

**C'wealth Funding:** $12,400.00

**Sponsor:** Shire Of Wagin

**Other Funding:** $18,900.00

**Project Title:** Revegetation in the Cancanning Catchment

**Program:** Drought Envirofund - Landcare

**Applicant:** Cancanning Catchment Group

**C'wealth Funding:** $12,400.00

**Sponsor:** Shire Of Wagin

**Other Funding:** $18,900.00

**Project Title:** Revegetation in the Cancanning Catchment

**Program:** Drought Envirofund - Landcare

**Applicant:** Cancanning Catchment Group

**C'wealth Funding:** $12,400.00

**Sponsor:** Shire Of Wagin

**Other Funding:** $18,900.00
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>39725</td>
<td>$31,300.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Applicant Name: Miss Sally Thomson  
Address: PO Box 99  
WOODANILLING WA 6316

This first group project for the catchment will focus on improving surface water management to reduce ground water recharge rates, thereby managing water logging and the effects of salinity, while enhancing biodiversity value. Seepage interceptor banks will run fresh water away from saline seeps. Native seedlings will be established behind existing banks, and waterways will be fenced to increase water use and stabilise land to limit erosion. A total area of 20ha will be revegetated during the project. In addition, over 1.5km of waterway will be protected from erosion and high water tables to improve water quality. It is estimated that 50ha of area affected by waterlogging will be protected. An estimated increase of 60 ML/year in water will be harvested from farm catchments for on-farm use and environmental enhancement.

**Project Title:** Land Stabilisation in the Behn Ord Catchment  
**Program:** Drought Envirofund - Bushcare  
**Applicant:** Behn Ord Catchment Group  
**C’wealth Funding:** $29,730.00  
**Sponsor:** Shire Of Wagin  
**Other Funding:** $66,640.00  
**Project ID:** 39730  
**Total Funding:** $96,370.00

Applicant Name: Miss Sally Thomson  
Address: PO Box 99  
WOODANILLING WA 6316

This project will continue to implement the Behn Ord Group’s objective of managing surface water to improve land and water quality in the catchment. It involves 6 landholders. Waterways will be fenced off and some grade banks will be constructed to control erosion. Revegetation is designed to link with existing bush to create wildlife corridors and line contour banks to reduce water recharge rates. 29ha will be revegetated during the project. In addition, 7.2ha of remnant bush on high recharge areas will be protected and 4km of waterway will be protected from erosion and high water tables to improve water quality. It is estimated that 75ha of area affected by waterlogging and a further area of 91ha subject to erosion will be protected from those stresses. An estimated increase of 60 ML/year in water will be harvested from farm catchments for on-farm use and environmental enhancement.

**Project Title:** The Amelioration of the Rowles Creek Sub-Catchment  
**Program:** Drought Envirofund - Landcare  
**Applicant:** R.H. & M.L. Rowles  
**C’wealth Funding:** $14,464.00  
**Sponsor:** Other Funding  
**Project ID:** 39835  
**Total Funding:** $49,294.00

Applicant Name: Mrs Margaret Rowles  
Address: PO Box 73  
GOOMALLING WA 6460

This project is located along a creek line which flows into the north branch of the Mortlock River, in the Avon Basin. This project will protect 31ha of high priority remnant vegetation using 3.8km of fence, excluding stock. The woodland species found in the remnant includes Salmon Gum - Eucalyptus salmonophloia, York Gum - Eucalyptus loxophleba and the Powderback Wandoo - Eucalyptus accedens.
The project will also plant 11,500 seedlings to provide a buffer and protection for the creek line. This will improve the quality of water entering the creek system.

**Electorate: O'Connor**

**Drought Round**

**Project Title**: Maximising Water Harvesting, Nyabing, Western Australia

**Program**: Drought Envirofund - Rivercare

**Applicant**: Gnowanellup Catchment

**Sponsor**: Shire of Kent

**Project ID**: 39836

**Applicant Name**: Miss Hayley Turner

**Address**: Sanderson Street, PINGRUP WA 6343

This project will survey and construct 12.5km of sub-surface interceptor banks to maximise the collection of water in the Gnowanellup catchment. Constructing the banks will reduce the amount of run-off which will assist in the control of soil erosion.

**Project Title**: Fencing, Covenanting and Revegetation of Woodland and Granite Ecosystems in the Upper Welbungin Catchment, Mt Marshall

**Program**: Drought Envirofund - Bushcare

**Applicant**: Derek & Chris Putt

**Sponsor**: World Wide Fund for Nature - Australia

**Project ID**: 39854

**Applicant Name**: Mr and Mrs Derek & Chris Putt

**Address**: PO BOX 78, BENCUBBIN WA 6477

We will fence a 153ha rectangular block of remnant vegetation, comprising york gum woodland/granite outcrop association/acacia shrubland. The area is in excellent condition, and supports a wide range of plant and animal species, including the nationally vulnerable malleefowl. By fencing our remnant, we aim to protect malleefowl habitat, and improve the habitat value of the area, for biodiversity conservation purposes. We will also revegetate an adjacent area with native species to reduce wind erosion and provide additional habitat into the future.

**Project Title**: Protection of Woodland and Wetlands Adjoining Lake Chidnup

**Program**: Drought Envirofund - Bushcare

**Applicant**: N & D.K. McAllister

**Sponsor**: Moolyall Woodenup Creek Catchment Group Inc.

**Project ID**: 39868

**Applicant Name**: Mr Neil McAllister

**Address**: PO Box 97, RAVENSTHORPE WA 6346

This project will fence 7km to protect yate woodlands and wetlands from grazing by livestock and relocate livestock watering points away from the vegetation. This project will link privately owned woodlands and wetland areas to the Lake Chidnup Reserve and to the Jerdacuttup and Phillips River catch-
ments. Alternative water points will be established in areas to prevent stock from degrading the banks of the lake. The project will install a solar powered pump and pipes to pump the stock water to troughs to prevent degradation of the existing vegetation. Several dams on the property will be cleaned out to ensure adequate water supply when the drought has ended.

**Electorate: O’Connor**

**Drought Round**

**Project Title** Byron’s Hill Demonstration Site Revegetation Replacement

**Program** Drought Envirofund - Bushcare

**Applicant** The Trustee for the Hydillowah Trust

**C’wealth Funding** $6,437.00

**Sponsor** Other Funding $14,550.00

**Project ID** 39869

**Total Funding** $20,987.00

**Applicant Name** Mrs Jane Mouritz

**Address** PO Box 98 HYDEN WA 6359

This project will use locally collected native vegetation seed, grown to seedlings, to replace 15000 seedlings in a Revegetation Demonstration Site on Hydillowah Farm. These were originally planted in 2002 but 90% have died due to drought.

**Project Title** Reversing the Effects of Wind Erosion in the Goodlands Catchment

**Program** Drought Envirofund - Bushcare

**Applicant** HM Hudson & EM Hudson

**C’wealth Funding** $8,416.00

**Sponsor** Other Funding $27,812.00

**Project ID** 39879

**Total Funding** $36,228.00

**Applicant Name** Ms Elaine Hudson

**Address** PO Box 34 KALANNIE WA 6468

This project will at site (a) prevent further wind erosion caused by three years of drought in this area. We plan to increase the area sown to oil malles by using alley farming on the contour. This 70ha site is deep yellow sand, mid slope in landscape. The plan is to plant 11.5ha to malles by using 4 rows of malles every 60 metres. (stems 1.5 metres apart with rows 2 metres apart) 2000 trees per hectare, needing 23000 trees. This will allow continual cropping rotation in between.

**Project Title** Arthur River Catchments Land and Water Conservation

**Program** Drought Envirofund - Rivercare

**Applicant** Wardlocking Catchment Group/Lower Buchanan Catchment Group

**Sponsor** Shire Of Wagin

**C’wealth Funding** $27,191.00

**Project ID** 39963

**Other Funding** $65,000.00

**Applicant Name** Miss Sally Thomson

**Total Funding** $92,191.00

**Address** PO Box 99 WOODANILLING WA 6316

This project will re-establish perennials in the landscape and manage water movement to improve stream water quality and reduce waterlogging. Natural waterways are to be fenced off and revegetated to protect their banks and lower water tables, thereby improving water quality. Interceptor and grade banks are to be constructed to harvest water resources, reduce surface runoff rates to protect soils from erosion and intercept subsurface water flows to reduce downslope waterlogging. In addition, 50ha of
perennial pasture is to be sowed on a low lying waterlogged area to reduce the recharge and lower water tables. The total increase in area of perennial revegetation will be 77ha, protecting 8km of waterway. Approximately 33ML/yr will be harvested into dams to reduce waterlogging/erosion over an area of up to 120ha.

Electorate: O’Connor

Project Title: Revegetation to Link Remnant Vegetation and Combat Drought Caused Erosion Within the Talgomine Catchment

Program: Drought Envirofund - Landcare

Applicant: Nungarin Land Conservation District Committee Inc

C’wealth Funding: $5,700.00
Other Funding: $13,264.00
Total Funding: $18,964.00

Applicant Name: Mr Peter Jolly
Address: PO Box 105
NUNGARIN WA 6490

This project will replant 10,000 native seedlings to help restore native vegetation in the Talgomine Catchment and link the existing 1,246.9ha of remnant native vegetation within the catchment. This will also help to combat salinity and reduce the erosion caused by the drought. The project will also create a windbreak, improve soil structure and water absorption, and promote the restoration of biodiversity to the area.

Project Title: Winning the War on Bridal Creeper in Wagin/Woodanilling Landcare Zone

Program: Drought Envirofund - Landcare

Applicant: Wagin/Woodanilling Landcare Zone

C’wealth Funding: $22,750.00
Other Funding: $45,500.00
Total Funding: $68,250.00

Applicant Name: Miss Sally Thomson
Address: PO Box 99
WOODANILLING WA 6316

This project will build on previous work already completed within the Wagin/Woodanilling Landcare Zone to address the threat of bridal creeper as a problem weed in the area, in accordance with key recommendations in the Zone’s Weed Management Strategy. The project will help to control bridal creeper infestations over 90ha of land (which includes remnant bush, waterways and road reserves), with the long term objective of eradicating the weed from the Zone. The project will use both chemical and biological control methods for effective management.

Project Title: Upper 54 Creek Catchment Plan Implementation

Program: Drought Envirofund - Landcare

Applicant: Kojonup Landcare Inc.

C’wealth Funding: $22,091.00
Other Funding: $66,076.00
Total Funding: $88,167.00

Applicant Name: Ms Jenny Gardner
This project will contribute to the implementation of the Upper 54 Creek Catchment Plan. It will construct 7km of drains and erect 9.5km of fencing along creek lines. 20,300 trees in alley farming will be planted near creeks using local species, 500 trees will be planted on deep sand recharge areas, 2.5km of grade banks will be constructed, 5km of fencing of 4,000 local forestry species below the banks will be built, 4kg of local seed sown and 1 dam will be constructed for water harvesting for stock water.

Electorate: O' Connor  
Project Title: Mitigation of High Impact Wind Erosion in the Yarra-Yarra Catchment  
Program: Drought Envirofund - Landcare  
Applicant: Yarra Yarra Catchment Management Group Inc.  
C’wealth Funding: $27,273.00  
Other Funding: $67,400.00  
Total Funding: $94,673.00

The project will identify 10-20 broad scale wind eroded areas within the agricultural zone of the Yarra-Yarra (Lakes) Catchment, and rate their susceptibility using temporal and spatial data. Current and past satellite imagery will be interpreted and analysed. On-ground verification will also occur, and information provided by farmers and the community will also be assessed. The project will target locations that are identified by the above process and provide information on the best practices for dealing with wind erosion. The project will plant 35,000 trees and erect 7km of fencing.

Project Title: Drought Action for Woodland Birds  
Program: Drought Envirofund - Bushcare  
Applicant: Mid West Biodiversity Network  
C’wealth Funding: $16,640.00  
Other Funding: $81,768.00  
Total Funding: $98,408.00

This project will fence off 10.4km of key woodland bird habitat. These remnants are predominately york gum woodland and acacia shrubland, mallee, salmon and gimlet. All remnants will be monitored and protected within a Woodland Watch Management Agreement and/or Land for Wildlife Covenant.

Project Title: Maximising Resource Use and Implementing Sustainable Management in the Carrolup Catchments  
Program: Drought Envirofund - Rivercare  
Applicant: Carrolup Catchments  
C’wealth Funding: $30,000.00  
Other Funding: $129,650.00  
Total Funding: $159,650.00

This project will contribute to the implementation of the Carrolup Catchment Plan. It will construct 7km of drains and erect 9.5km of fencing along creek lines. 20,300 trees in alley farming will be planted near creeks using local species, 500 trees will be planted on deep sand recharge areas, 2.5km of grade banks will be constructed, 5km of fencing of 4,000 local forestry species below the banks will be built, 4kg of local seed sown and 1 dam will be constructed for water harvesting for stock water.
Address  PO Box 803
         KATANNING WA 6317

This project will establish a series of sub-surface interceptor banks and dams to improve water and soil management in sub catchments west of Katanning. Revegetation will be fenced to minimise stock impacts on these native fauna corridors. The sub-surface interceptor banks will collect rainwater and direct it into dams for storage, reducing the recharge of excess water into the groundwater. Banks will reduce water erosion and the loss of topsoil across arable farmland.

Electorate: O'Connor
Project Title Protecting and Linking Rare Woodland Vegetation, North of Lake Grace, Western Australia
Program  Drought Envirofund - Landcare
Applicant  TN & DM Willcocks
C'wealth Funding  $5,510.00
Sponsor
Other Funding  $35,460.00
Project ID  40267
Total Funding  $40,970.00
Applicant Name  Mr Jeff Willcocks
Address  PO Box 225
         LAKE GRACE WA 6353

This project will fence off two large areas of woodland which will be linked together with a 20 metre wide fauna corridor. Site 1 is a Salmon Gum/Gimlet remnant of approximately 30ha. Directly adjacent to this is a 12.5ha area of vegetation that has begun to regenerate. This area will require 2.6km of fencing. Site 1 will be linked to Site 2 by an 800m long corridor of approximately 4ha. It will be revegetated with endemic species, leaving an area unplanted directly in the drainage line to allow for water flow. The corridor will be fenced on both sides with 1.6km of fencing. Site 2 is a large remnant of approximately 290ha which will require 5.9km of fencing to fence the western and southern edges of the remnant.

Project Title  Roy Gray Remnant Protection 2003
Program  Drought Envirofund - Landcare
Applicant  W.R. & N. Gray
C'wealth Funding  $16,182.00
Sponsor
Other Funding  $126,128.00
Project ID  40272
Total Funding  $142,310.00
Applicant Name  Mr Stephen Fry
Address  PO Box 17
         NAREMBEEN WA 6369

This project will protect by way of a conservation covenant in perpetuity and by fencing, 109ha of remnant vegetation in excellent condition. In addition, a further 5ha of degraded farmland will be revegetated, which will join the covenanted area to another remnant block owned by a neighbouring farmer. A community of Shield Backed Trap Door Spiders will also be protected by the project as stock will be excluded from their habitat.

Project Title  Lockwood Gully Catchment - Erosion Management and Waterway Protection
Program  Drought Envirofund - Landcare
Applicant  Lockwood Gully Catchment Group
C'wealth Funding  $13,473.00
Sponsor  Shire of Bruce Rock
Other Funding  $27,108.00
Lockwood Gully consists of approximately 18km of waterway that is under threat of high erosion due to several years of drought conditions. Five local landholders will erect 10km of fences for better management of stock, plant over 10,000 native seedlings adjacent to the waterway to stabilise the soil, and construct earthworks to repair current erosion channels and increase water usage capabilities such as stock access points. Monitoring will be undertaken of ground water levels (pre and post treatment), birds, water quality and revegetation photopoints. The site will also be a demonstration site for future waterway conservation works.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Electorate: O’Connor</th>
<th>Drought Round</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Project Title</td>
<td>Restoration of a Freshwater Wetland Near the Stirling Ranges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program</td>
<td>Drought Envirofund - Rivercare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applicant</td>
<td>Albany Eastern Hinterland Inc.</td>
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<tr>
<td>C’wealth Funding</td>
<td>$3,619.00</td>
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<td>Sponsor</td>
<td>Other Funding</td>
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<tr>
<td>$10,924.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Funding</td>
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</table>

This project will restore a freshwater wetland on a property near the base of the Stirling Range National Park. Stock have denuded riparian vegetation through access in previous years. A good overstorey stabilising the soil combined with a gentle slope has prevented erosion on the site. 2.25km of fencing will be erected to exclude stock. Weeds will be removed and Sha will be revegetated.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project Title</th>
<th>Fencing Shade and Shelter Belts for Conservation and Regeneration</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Program</td>
<td>Drought Envirofund - Landcare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applicant</td>
<td>Sun Valley AG</td>
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<tr>
<td>C’wealth Funding</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Funding</td>
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This project will erect a 4.5km fence to enclose shade shelter and wind break vegetation to exclude livestock and improve the survival rate of the vegetation. Due to drought conditions in the Mt Marshall Shire and the lack of paddock feed, livestock is grazing more heavily in the shelter/windbreak and destroying some of its potential for regeneration when the drought breaks.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Project Title</th>
<th>Mallefowl Preservation in Drought Stricken North Cental WA Wheat belt</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Program</td>
<td>Drought Envirofund - Landcare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applicant</td>
<td>North Central Mallefowl Preservation Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C’wealth Funding</td>
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<td>Sponsor</td>
<td>Other Funding</td>
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<td>$82,280.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Funding</td>
<td>$104,330.00</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
This project will maintain, conserve and enhance Malleefowl populations and habitats. This will be done through the strategic fencing of approximately 10km of key Malleefowl habitat (predominantly York Gum and Acacia scrubland) at two sites. The fox population in the region will be reduced using 5500 baits. These measures will increase the biodiversity in the area and protect the Malleefowl populations.

**Environment: Solomon Islands Dolphin Trade**

(Question No. 2326)

Mr Kelvin Thomson asked the Minister for the Environment and Heritage, upon notice, on 8 September 2003:

(1) Is it the case that the brother of the Prime Minister of the Solomon Islands is involved in the dolphin trade.

(2) What steps has the Government taken to ensure urgent qualified veterinary attention is provided to the captured dolphins currently residing in shallow pens in Gavutu Island and have any inspections been undertaken; if so, where are the reports.

(3) Is he aware of the memorandum from Moses Biliki, Director of the Environment and Conservation Division, Ministry of Forests, Environment and Conservation in the Solomon Islands, to the Secretary, Foreign Investment Board and the Director, Fisheries Division dated 19 March 2003 in which Moses Biliki states “There is currently not enough data on wild stocks of the dolphin population in Solomon Island waters. The Environment and Conservation Division wishes to advise that further approvals for new operations on the exploitation of dolphins be curtailed.”, and on what does he base his view that the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna (CITES) provision has not been violated.

(4) Is he able to say (a) what relevant legislation is in force in the Solomon Islands to protect fauna and flora, and (b) whether the provisions of this legislation were adhered to.

(5) Is he able to say (a) under which provisions of which Solomon Islands Act was the export of dolphins allowed, and (b) who is currently enforcing and supervising the Solomon Islands laws that enable these exports to occur.

(6) What is the purpose of the export of dolphins and, if these exports are for the purpose of supplying amusement parks in Mexico and other countries, does the Government support this trade.

(7) What steps is he taking to prevent any further exports of dolphins.

Dr Kemp—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) The Australian Government has no information to suggest that the brother of the Prime Minister of the Solomon Islands is involved in the dolphin trade.

(2) The Australian High Commission in Honiara has received advice from the Solomon Islands Marine Mammal Education Centre that they are providing ongoing veterinary care to the dolphins. The Australian High Commission in Honiara has also assisted with facilitating a visit by an inspection team from the World Conservation Union (IUCN) Cetacean Specialist Group. The team, which included a qualified marine mammal veterinarian, travelled to Solomon Islands from 9-12 September to assess the dolphins and the conditions in which they are being held. The team has released a report on their findings. The team found that all of the animals observed appeared to be in good body condition within normal weight ranges for this species. No skin lesions were
observed. The dolphins’ eyes were open, no abnormal discharges were observed and respiratory rates were regular. Copies of the Report are available at the Cetacean Specialist Group’s website, www.iucn-vsg.org.

(3) I am aware of the memorandum. It is my understanding that the export license in question was issued prior to this memorandum.

I am aware of ongoing questions about the validity of the export documentation issued by the Solomon Islands. Under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), it is up to the CITES parties engaged in the trade to ensure that all obligations are satisfied.

(4) (a) The relevant legislation in force in the Solomon Islands with respect to the capture of dolphins is the Fisheries Act 1998.

(b) The Solomon Islands Minister for Fisheries and Marine Resources has assured me that all aspects of the export to Mexico were legal under Solomon Islands law including the Fisheries Act 1998, which allows for the export of aquatic animals.

(5) (a) The export of the dolphins was allowed under Section 32 of the Fisheries Act 1998.

(b) The Solomon Islands Government is responsible for the enforcement of its national laws.

(6) The purpose of the export of the dolphins was a commercial enterprise. Australia does not engage in trade in live cetaceans, which would be illegal under our domestic legislation, the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999.

(7) The Australian Government has received an open statement from the Mexican Government that states that the Mexican Government will not authorise future imports from the Solomon Islands. There has been some speculation that the remaining dolphins in the Solomon Islands were destined for export to destinations in Asia, including Taiwan, China and Japan. We have been in contact with the relevant authorities in these countries and have been informed that they are unaware of any existing proposals to import dolphins. We are also continuing discussions with the Solomon Islands Government.

**Immigration: Visa Approvals**

*(Question No. 2331)*

Mr Martin Ferguson asked the Minister representing the Minister for Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs, upon notice, on 8 September 2003:

(1) For each of the financial years (a) 2001-2002 and (b) 2002-2003, (i) how many people have arrived by ship as stowaways and, of these stowaways, (ii) how many have applied for protection in Australia, (iii) how many have applied for Bridging Visa E, Special Category Visas, (iv) what was the citizenship of each applicant, and (v) how many were successful.

(2) For each of the financial years (a) 2001-2002 and (b) 2002-2003, (i) what was the cost of processing the stowaways in detention, including the cost of processing protection applications, and (ii) was any of the cost of handling such unauthorised sea arrivals recovered from the shipping company; if not why not.

(3) How many ship jumpers have been granted protection visas each year from (a) 2001-2002 and (b) 2002-2003 and, of these how many applications are still being processed.

Mr Hardgrave—the Minister for Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs has provided the following answer to the honourable member’s question:

(1) (a) (i) 28.
(ii) 10 applied for Protection Visas (PVs) in Australia.
(iii) None applied for Bridging visas E or Special Category Visas.
(iv) Of the 10 PV applicants, 5 are from Iraq, 2 are from the Democratic Republic of Congo, 2 are from Burundi and 1 is from Somalia.
(v) Of the 10 PV applications, 8 have been successful and 2 have been refused. These numbers differ from those provided in response to question No. 526 due to the favourable merits review of a PV refusal and subsequent grant of the visa.

(b) (i) 15.
(ii) 3 applied for PVs in Australia.
(iii) None applied for Bridging visas E or Special Category Visas.
(iv) Of the 3 PV applicants, 1 is from Burundi, 1 is from Iraq and 1 is from the Democratic Republic of Congo.
(v) Of the 3 PV applications, 1 has been refused and 2 have not yet been finally determined.

(2) The Department does not keep separate costs associated with the processing of stowaways in detention, including the cost of processing PV applications. Costs vary considerably depending on the time taken to process an application. The average cost of keeping an unlawful non-citizen in a detention centre in 2001-02 and in 2002-03 was $160 and $273 per day respectively. The average cost of processing a PV applicant in detention in 2001-02 was around $3,500. The average cost of processing a PV applicant in detention for 2002-03 will be available in November 2003.

While the Department infringes shipping companies for bringing stowaways without reporting them on arrival, it does not recover the cost of detention and processing of stowaways who seek protection and make PV applications on arrival. This policy is applied to ensure that there is an incentive to notify the presence of the stowaway. Shipping companies are, however, liable for the costs of removing stowaways whose PV applications have been unsuccessful.

(3) (a) Of the 43 deserters (ship jumpers) recorded in 2001-02, 28 applied for PVs in Australia. Of the 28 PV applications, 4 have been successful, 2 have been refused and 22 have not yet been finally determined.
(b) Of the 36 deserters recorded in 2002-03, 19 applied for PVs in Australia. Of the 19 PV applications, 1 has been successful, 1 has been refused and 17 have not yet been finally determined.

Health: Childhood Obesity
(Question No. 2337)

Mr Organ asked the Minister representing the Minister for Health and Ageing, upon notice, on 8 September 2003:

(1) What Federal programs are currently available to treat and prevent childhood obesity.
(2) What funding is available within the Minister’s portfolio for the provision of behavioural change programs, particularly those undertaken by non-GP health professionals.
(3) What, if any, rebates or subsidies are available under Medicare for behavioural change programs to address childhood obesity.
(4) What, if any, rebates or subsidies are available under Medicare for any program to address childhood obesity.
(5) What actions, activities, programs or funding avenues does the Government intend to pursue in the next 5 years to address childhood obesity.

Mr Abbott—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) Federal funding for the treatment of childhood obesity is via:
- Medicare rebate for services rendered by qualified medical practitioners in the private setting in accordance with accepted clinical practice; and
- Public hospital funding provided by the Australian Health Care Agreements to the States and Territories for admitted services as well as outpatient treatment clinics.

There is no specific federal program for the prevention of childhood obesity, however several Government initiatives contribute to obesity prevention, including:
- The Community Awareness and Infrastructure component ($4.3m over 3 years) of the 2003-04 Budget initiative Focus on Prevention, which aims to achieve greater focus on disease prevention and health promotion in primary care. This includes strengthening the role of general practitioners in assisting patients to achieve a healthy weight and to live healthy lifestyles;
- The Public Health Education and Research Program ($10.6m in 2003-04), which provides health professionals with knowledge and skills in health promotion to support healthy lifestyle behaviours, including obesity prevention.
- The Rural Chronic Disease Initiative ($5.4m in 2003-04), which assists small rural communities to prevent and better manage chronic conditions, including obesity. The Initiative supports 31 projects demonstrating local solutions for the prevention and better management of local health issues, such as promoting physical activity and healthy eating, increasing knowledge of risk factors, and developing effective support systems for people living with a chronic disease or injury.

(2) and (3) The principal source of Government funding for primary health care is through the Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS), which provide rebates for clinically relevant services by qualified medical practitioners and some dental and optometrical services. The MBS provides funding for patients to use psychiatric support which may include behavioural change programs. The Medicare Benefits Schedule does not fund services provided by allied health professionals, such as psychologists and physiotherapists, which is the responsibility of either State or Territory governments or private health services.

Other federal funding for behaviour change programs includes:
- The 2003-04 Budget initiative Focus on Prevention, which will encourage stronger links between general practitioners, other health professionals and community based programs and services, making it easier to address lifestyle issues that are often difficult for doctors to deal with alone.
- The Australian Government contribution to the cost of private health insurance through the 30% Rebate on private health insurance premiums. A number of private health insurance funds provide benefits for weight management programs including those designed to address childhood obesity.

(4) While there are no rebates or subsidies available under Medicare specifically for programs to address childhood obesity, Medicare rebates are available for services rendered by medical practitioners treating children for obesity in the private setting in accordance with accepted clinical practice.

(5) Since March 2003, the Government has been working with the Australian Health Ministers National Obesity Taskforce, which was initiated by the former Australian Government Minister for Health and Ageing, on the development of a national agenda for addressing childhood obesity. The
Government will consider its future actions in this area after the Taskforce reports to Health Ministers on 28 November 2003.

In addition, the Australian Government is currently developing a National Agenda for Early Childhood that aims to provide our children in the age-group 0-5 years with the best possible start in life. Fostering good early nutrition and physical play will assist in preventing childhood obesity and other health problems later in life.

**Insurance: Medical Indemnity**

(Question No. 2340)

Mr Murphy asked the Minister representing the Minister for Health and Ageing, upon notice, on 8 September 2003:

(1) Is the Minister aware of a letter from the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Health and Ageing to the Member for Lowe dated 7 May 2003 regarding uncertainties in the medical indemnity insurance industry.

(2) How much money will be needed to fund the Incurred But Not Reported (IBNR) Government Guarantee and what proportion of the levy on medical practitioners does this represent; if this amount cannot be stated, why not.

(3) From what date will the IBNR Government Guarantee be effective and, if the effective date of commencement cannot be stated, why not.

(4) What accounting arrangements will apply to the funds collected by the levy, in particular, will the funds collected go into a special levy fund and be recorded and reported on separately or will the funds go into the Commonwealth Consolidated Revenue; if the accounting arrangements have not been determined, why not.

(5) What provisions, if any, have been made to refund any excess funds to contributors.

(6) If no provisions exist to refund any excess funds to contributors, (a) why not, and (b) does the Minister intend to make provisions to refund excess funds in future; if not, why not.

(7) Will Medical Defence Organisations (MDO’s) be asked to build reserves of funds to meet the Australian Prudential Regulation Authority (APRA) approved reserves; if so, what is the Government’s target amount.

(8) Will there be a further Government levy on all practitioners to fund the ‘High Cost Claims’ Scheme; if so, will only those in ‘high risk’ medical specialties be affected; if not, is the Commonwealth Government prepared to bear the cost of such losses and, if the Government is not prepared to bear the cost of losses, why not.

(9) What is the Government’s policy, if any, on stamp duty imposed by the States and Territories on insurance policies.

(10) Is the Minister aware that State and Territory stamp duties account for nearly twenty per cent of annual insurance premiums and that this cost is passed on to the consumer.

(11) What are the reasons for the spiralling cost of insurance for medico-legal indemnity.

(12) What is the Government doing to assist the medical profession to prepare for rising insurance premiums so that medical practitioners can make adequate provision for such overheads now.

Mr Abbott—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) Yes.

(2) Based on current estimates the Government will pay some $460 million in net present value terms to meet the Incurred But Not Reported (IBNR) liabilities of United Medical Protection Ltd (UMP).
Some 80 per cent of this will be recovered from medical practitioners who were members of UMP as at 30 June 2000. The remaining 20 per cent (representing amounts that would otherwise have been recovered from members turning 65) will be budget-funded. The Government has agreed to review these estimates in the Medical Indemnity policy review.

(3) The Government’s assumption of liability extended to payments in relation to incidents occurring on or before 30 June 2002 but not notified to UMP by that date.

(4) As required by the Constitution, the funds collected by the levy will be paid into the Consolidated Revenue. The Health Insurance Commission will maintain records of amount collected and payments made under the IBNR scheme.

(5) Under current arrangements there is no provision for refunding excess funds collected or recovering collections in deficit at the end of the IBNR Scheme. However, while doctors are contributing to the scheme, contributions can be adjusted, for example, as a result of annual actuarial reassessments. Overpayments can be refunded at any time.

(6) (a) The final cost of the IBNR scheme may not be known for as much as 25 years.
(b) The Policy Review announced recently will look into issues which are of concern in the current arrangements.

(7) It is the insurers of Medical Defence Organisations (MDO) rather than the MDOs themselves that are asked to build reserves of funds to meet the Australian Prudential Regulation Authority (APRA) approved reserves. Medical indemnity insurers must be authorised under the Insurance Act 1973 and must meet the same prudential and capital provisioning requirements as any other general insurer authorised by APRA.

The amount of reserves that insurers need to build will depend on whether they have already adequately provisioned for their liabilities. Prudential Standard GPS 110 (Capital Adequacy for General Insurers) requires each general insurer to maintain at least a minimum amount of capital. An insurer’s minimum capital requirement is determined having regard to a range of risk factors that may threaten the ability of the insurer to meet policy holder obligations - principally reflecting insurance risk, investment risk and concentration risk. An insurer’s capital resources must be appropriate to the size, business mix and complexity of its business. An insurer’s minimum capital requirements cannot be less than $5 million.

Transitional provisions apply under the Medical Indemnity (Prudential Supervision and Product Standards) Act 2003 so that institutions wishing to provide medical indemnity cover will have up to five years to comply with the minimum capital requirements imposed by prudential standards made under the Insurance Act. This is intended to allow certain medical indemnity providers to reach appropriate levels of prudential capital over time, given the industry has generally not previously been subject to prudential supervision.

(8) The High Cost Claims Scheme is a fully budget-funded measure. Practitioners will not be levied to fund the Scheme.

(9) The Government has called for the States and Territories to remove stamp duty from medical indemnity insurance policies.

(10) I am aware that State and Territory stamp duty on medical indemnity insurance ranges from 5% to 11%. It may well be that individual doctors are deciding to pass this amount on to consumers.

(11) In the first Ministerial meeting on insurance, held on 27 March 2002, an expert report identified the major factors behind rising premiums as:
- changing community attitudes to litigation;
- change in the courts’ view of what constitutes negligence;
• increased compensation payments for bodily injury claims;
• past under-pricing and poor profitability of the insurance industry;
• the collapse of HIH; and
• a decision by insurance companies to be more selective about the risks that they cover.

(12) The Government’s medical indemnity package is putting downward pressure on medical indemnity premiums into the future by:
• High Cost Claims Scheme that covers 50 per cent of claims over $500,000 up to the level of the doctor’s insurance, at a cost of $40 million per year;
• direct financial support for doctors undertaking the high-risk specialities of obstetrics and neurosurgery, General Practitioners performing procedures, and GP Registrars undertaking procedural training, at a cost of around $38 million per year;
• that Exceptional Claims Scheme where the Government will indemnify doctors and meet 100% of any claims payable that exceed a specified threshold, currently $20 million;
• monitoring of medical indemnity insurance premiums by the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission, at a cost of $1.5 million; and
• encouraging State and Territory tort law reform to ensure that State and Territory governments continue to work towards nationally consistent tort law and legal systems reform.

Privacy Protection
(Question No. 2348)

Mr McClelland asked the Attorney-General, upon notice, on 9 September 2003:

(1) Does he recall issuing a media release on 29 November 2000 in which he stated (a) “the Government will review existing Commonwealth, State and Territory laws to consider the extent of privacy protection for employee records”, (b) “the review will commence after the Privacy Amendment (Private Sector) Bill 2000… is enacted but before it comes into effect 12 months later”, and (c) “the review will be completed in time to assist the Privacy Commissioner when he conducts the more general review of the legislation two years after it commences operation”.

(2) Is he aware that an officer of his department told the Senate Legal and Constitutional Estimates Committee on 10 February 2003 that (a) “this review is being undertaken jointly by this Department and the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations, and it will commence with the publication of an issues paper. We hope that that will be fairly soon.”, and (b) “then there will be consultations with business, unions, state and territory governments, the Privacy Commissioner and other key stakeholders. We expect the report to be available for ministers later this year. That will then be taken account of in the review of the Privacy Act that the Privacy Commissioner has been charged with.”

(3) In respect of the issues paper, (a) who prepared it, (b) when did its preparation commence, (c) when was it completed, (d) what was the cost of its preparation, and (e) will it be released; if so, when; if not, why not.

(4) Whom has the Government consulted to date as part of this review, and what further consultations are planned.

(5) Will this review be completed by the commencement of the general review of the private sector privacy legislation; if not, (a) why not, and (b) when will it be completed and the report made available to Ministers.

Mr Ruddock—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) I am aware of the media release issued by the former Attorney-General.
(2) Yes.

(3) (a) The issues paper was prepared by the Attorney-General’s Department in consultation with the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations.

(b) The preparation of the issues paper commenced in March 2003.

(c) The preparation of the issues paper will be completed when it is cleared by both Ministers.

(d) The preparation of the issues paper was undertaken within the existing resources of the Attorney-General’s Department and the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations and was therefore not separately costed.

(e) The issues paper will be released when it is completed.

(4) The Government consulted with some key stakeholders during the preparation of the issues paper. The issues paper will be distributed to all key stakeholders and also be accessible on the internet.

(5) It is expected that the review will be completed and a report presented to Ministers in early 2004.

Privacy Protection

Mr McClelland asked the Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations, upon notice, on 9 September 2003:

1. Is he aware that the former Minister for Employment, Workplace Relations and Small Business issued a media release on 29 November 2000 in which he stated (a) “the Government will review existing Commonwealth, State and Territory laws to consider the extent of privacy protection for employee records”, (b) “the review will commence after the Privacy Amendment (Private Sector) Bill 2000… is enacted but before it comes into effect 12 months later”, and (c) “the review will be completed in time to assist the Privacy Commissioner when he conducts the more general review of the legislation two years after it commences operation”.

2. Is he aware that an officer of the Attorney-General’s Department told the Senate Legal and Constitutional Estimates Committee on 10 February 2003 that (a) “this review is being undertaken jointly by this Department and the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations, and it will commence with the publication of an issues paper. We hope that that will be fairly soon.”, and (b) “then there will be consultations with business, unions, state and territory governments, the Privacy Commissioner and other key stakeholders. We expect the report to be available for ministers later this year. That will then be taken account of in the review of the Privacy Act that the Privacy Commissioner has been charged with.”

3. In respect of the issues paper, (a) who prepared it, (b) when did its preparation commence, (c) when was it completed, (d) what was the cost of its preparation, and (e) will it be released; if so, when; if not, why not.

4. Whom has the Government consulted to date as part of this review, and what further consultations are planned.

5. Will this review be completed by the commencement of the general review of the private sector privacy legislation; if not, (a) why not, and (b) when will it be completed and the report made available to Ministers.

Mr Andrews—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

1. Yes.

2. No.
(3) (a) The issues paper has been prepared by the Attorney-General’s Department in consultation with the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations.

(b) The preparation of the issues paper commenced in March 2003.

(c) The issues paper will be completed when it has been cleared by both Ministers.

(d) The preparation of the issues paper was undertaken within the existing resources of the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations and the Attorney-General’s Department and was therefore not separately costed.

(e) The issues paper will be released when it is completed.

(4) The Government consulted with some key stakeholders during the preparation of the issues paper. The issues paper will be distributed to all key stakeholders and be accessible on the internet.

(5) It is expected that the review will be completed and a report presented to Ministers in early 2004.

Communications: Sale of Property
(Question No. 2355)

Ms Jann McFarlane asked the Minister for Communications, Information Technology and the Arts, upon notice, on 9 September 2003:

(1) When was the land that the Hamersley Transmission Tower is located on sold to a non-government company.

(2) What price was it sold for.

(3) Which Minister made the decision to sell the land.

(4) How much do Federal Government agencies pay Broadcast Australia each year for broadcasting services.

Mr Williams—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) The Australian Government’s interest in the Hamersley broadcasting transmission facility and associated land was vested, as part of the National Transmission Network (NTN) sale process, in the National Transmission Company (NTC) on 30 April 1999. Shares in the NTC were then sold later that day in accordance with the National Transmission Network Sale Act 1998.

(2) The NTN assets, as vested in the NTC, were sold in their entirety for $650 million. Prices are not available for individual sites. The current owner of the NTN is Broadcast Australia Pty Limited.

(3) The then Minister for Finance and Administration, the Hon John Fahey MP, was the Minister responsible for managing the sale process.

(4) The Government provides ongoing funding to the ABC and SBS for their transmission services costs. Contracts for new services are let through competitive procurement processes. The ABC and SBS collectively made payments of $132,523,308.62 to Broadcast Australia in 2002-03.

Drugs: Prescription Medication
(Question No. 2364)

Mrs Crosio asked the Minister representing the Minister for Health and Ageing, upon notice, on 10 September 2003:

(1) Is the Minister aware of a report published in the Sydney Morning Herald by John Merson on 1 May 2002, which stated that there was a substantial increase in the prescription of Dexedrine and Ritalin to treat children with either ADD or ADHD between 1991 and 1998.
(2) Will the Government commission a study into the increasing tendency to treat these conditions with medication; if not, why not.
(3) What programs are currently funded by the Government to educate parents and children about the benefits of improved nutrition.
(4) Is there any evidence indicating that poor diet is a factor contributing to behavioural problems in children.

Mr Abbott—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) Yes.

(2) At this stage, the Government has no plans to commission a study into treatment of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) with medication. The decision to prescribe medications is a decision made by doctors in appropriate circumstances. Pharmacological therapies in treating these disorders are effective and useful clinical tools when used as part of a comprehensive management plan. Doctors and patients are encouraged to continue to talk about their medicines to ensure that medicines are only used when they are appropriate, and that their risks and benefits are explored in each situation.

(3) The Australian Government and the Department of Health and Ageing is committed to improving the nutritional health of all Australians through the development and dissemination of national nutrition guidelines and initiatives.

The Department’s National Child Nutrition Program aims to improve the long term eating patterns of children aged 0-12 years and of pregnant women in high need environments through 110 community based projects. This three year community grants program aims to improve: nutrition related knowledge and skills of children and their parents; the capacity of communities to promote better nutritional health; and access to and availability of nutritious foods.

The Department has developed and disseminated a range of nutrition scientific guidelines and consumer resources. These include the recently updated National Health and Medical Research Council Dietary Guidelines for Australian Adults, Dietary Guidelines for Children and Adolescents in Australia (incorporating the Infant Feeding Guidelines for Health Workers) as well as the Dietary Guidelines for Older Australians and the national food selection guide, The Australian Guide to Healthy Eating. These evidence-based national guidelines place an emphasis on eating a wide variety of nutritious foods, and actively promote the increased consumption of vegetables, fruits and legumes. The guideline publications are widely distributed for use by health professionals, educators and families and address the importance of balancing dietary intake with adequate amounts of physical activity for optimal health.

As part of the 2003-04 Budget’s Focus on Prevention Package, lifestyle prescription tools are being developed to assist General Practitioners (GPs) to identify and manage patient health risk factors, including poor nutrition. Lifestyle prescriptions will allow GPs to set goals with their patients and provide advice and support to address health risk factors.

The Department also funds key organisations such as the Australian College of Midwives Incorporated and the Australian Breastfeeding Association to promote baby friendly hospitals and develop and distribute breastfeeding resources for mothers and primary care professionals.

(4) The recently updated National Health and Medical Research Council Dietary Guidelines for Children and Adolescents in Australia (incorporating the Infant Feeding Guidelines for Health Workers) outlines the recent evidence on diet-related health conditions. The Guidelines make the following conclusions on the relationship between nutrition and behaviour:
breastmilk, the optimal source of nutrition for infants (especially for the first 6 months of life), is an important contributor to reducing the risk of developing a range of conditions (eg allergy to cows milk, respiratory infections and asthma) and potentially to improve visual acuity, psychomotor development and IQ scores;

- the relationship between behaviour and food allergies is unclear and a reliance on dietary manipulation as an initial step in the management of behavioural problems may delay the use of more appropriate strategies and exacerbate the problem;

- nutrient deficiencies resulting from a poor diet, for example a lack of iron, can have effects on behaviour, cognition and motor development, physical work performance and body temperature; and

- there is no evidence that sugars or sugar-containing foods are involved in the aetiology of attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder.

The Guidelines and consumer resources are available through telephoning 1800 020 103 (extension 8654) or 02 6269 1080, faxing 02-6260 2770, e-mailing: phd.publications@health.gov.au and can be downloaded from the internet at: www.nhmrc.gov.au/publications/synopses/dietsyn.htm

Educational Lending Right Scheme
(Question No. 2367)

Mr Murphy asked the Minister representing the Minister for the Arts and Sport, upon notice, on 10 September 2003:

(1) Can the Minister confirm that the Educational Lending Right Scheme (ELR) was introduced (a) on a temporary basis at the same time as the Goods and Services Tax (GST), and (b) as an extension of the Public Lending Right Scheme (PLR) to recompense authors of educational books.

(2) Will the ELR expire in June 2004; if so, why.

(3) Will the Government guarantee that the ELR, or an equivalent scheme, will continue to recompense authors of educational books beyond 2004; if not, why not.

Mr Williams—The Minister for the Arts and Sport has provided the following answer to the honourable member’s question:

(1) to (3) Educational Lending Right (ELR) is one element of the four year Book Industry Assistance Plan and is funded from 2000-01 to 2003-04.

The objectives of ELR are:

- to make payments to eligible Australian creators and publishers on the basis that income is lost from the availability of their books in educational lending libraries; and

- to support the enrichment of Australian culture by encouraging the growth and development of Australian writing and publishing.

ELR complements the existing Public Lending Right (PLR) scheme which covers books held in public lending libraries.

The Government is pleased at the very positive reception ELR has received from the writing community and the benefits which the payments have brought to a sector which contributes significantly to Australian culture.

In common with all programs introduced for a specific period of time, the continuation of ELR after 30 June 2004 will be considered by the Government in the 2004-05 budget context.
Roads: Deer Park Bypass
(Question No. 2368)

Mr Martin Ferguson asked the Minister for Transport and Regional Services, upon notice, on 10 September 2003:
(1) In respect of the Deer Park Bypass project on the national highway system, how much will the bypass cost to complete and how much would be required in each year of construction.
(2) Has design and/or planning work commenced for this project; if so, how much will that work cost and when will it be completed; if not, when will this work be done and how long will it take to complete.
(3) What is the benefit cost ratio for the Deer Park bypass and which other current national highway projects have a higher benefit cost ratio than that for the Deer Park bypass.
(4) Will he approve the expenditure to pay for this important project; if so, when; if not, why not.

Mr Anderson—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:
(1) The current estimated cost of construction of the Deer Park bypass project is $250 million. Victoria’s National Highway Forward Strategy 2003-04 to 2007-08 outlines estimated construction funding contributions as follows:

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<td>5th year</td>
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(2) All planning work is now complete.
(3) Based on calculations by the Victorian Government, the Benefit Cost Ratio (BCR) for Deer Park is 2.0. A current National Highway project in Victoria, which has a higher BCR than Deer Park, is the Craigieburn Bypass with a BCR of 2.6.
(4) Funding for this project will be considered under the proposed Auslink framework.

Throsby Electorate: Higher Education Contribution Scheme Fees
(Question No. 2372)

Ms George asked the Minister for Education, Science and Training, upon notice, on 10 September 2003:
(1) For each year from 1998 to 2003 for each of the postcodes (a) 2502, (b) 2505, (c) 2506, (d) 2526, (e) 2527, (f) 2528, (g) 2529, and (h) 2530, how many persons in the electoral division of Throsby undertook undergraduate university study.
(2) Of these students, what proportion and what number undertook study in (a) Accounting, (b) Arts, (c) Dentistry, (d) Economics, (e) Engineering, (f) Information Technology, (g) Law, (h) Medicine, (i) Nursing, (j) Teaching, (k) Science, and (l) Veterinary Science.
(3) How many students (a) in total, and (b) from the electoral division of Throsby, are enrolled at the University of Wollongong and what proportion of all enrolments at the University of Wollongong do the students from the electoral division of Throsby represent.
(4) How many people (a) in total, and (b) in the electoral division of Throsby currently have an outstanding or accumulated Higher Education Contribution Scheme (HECS) debt.
(5) How many students in the electoral division of Throsby paid (a) upfront HECS fees, and (b) upfront full fees in 2002-2003.

(6) How many people in the electoral division of Throsby not currently enrolled at a university have an outstanding or accumulated HECS debt.

(7) Of those people with a HECS debt, what is the average HECS debt per person in (a) Australia, and (b) the electoral division of Throsby.

(8) How many students (a) in total, and (b) from the electoral division of Throsby, are enrolled at the Illawarra Institute of TAFE, and what proportion of all enrolments at the Illawarra Institute of TAFE do the students from the electoral division of Throsby represent.

(9) How much money has been allocated from the 2003-2004 Budget for apprenticeship programs in the electoral division of Throsby and what are the programs.

Dr Nelson—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) My Department does not collect student enrolment data on the basis of electorates. Information for the postcodes requested has been provided at Attachment A. As data for 2003 is not yet available the table only includes the number of students from 1998 to 2002.

(2) The answer to this question is provided at Attachment B. Full year data for 2003 is not yet available.

(3) (a) Total enrolments at the University of Wollongong in 2002 were 18,764.
(b) My Department does not collect records of student enrolments on the basis of the electorate in which university students live.

(4) (a) As at 30 June 2003, the Australian Taxation Office (ATO) recorded a total of 1,154,812 persons with an outstanding HECS debt.
(b) The ATO does not collect records of HECS debts on the basis of the electorate in which persons with a HECS debt live.

(5) My Department does not collect records of student payment options on the basis of the electorate in which university students live.

(6) The ATO does not collect records of HECS debts on the basis of the electorate in which persons with a HECS debt live.

(7) (a) As at 30 June 2003, the average HECS debt per person was $8,500.
(b) The ATO does not collect records of HECS debts on the basis of the electorate in which persons with a HECS debt live.

(8) (a) Total enrolments at the Illawarra Institute of TAFE in 2002 were 41,397 (Source: Page 9, the Illawarra Institute of TAFE’s 2002 Annual National Report). My Department has not been able to use National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) data for this response. Due to confidentiality issues, details of VET participants at the level of individual Institute will not be released by NCVER without written permission of the manager of the TAFE concerned.
(b) My Department is not able to answer this question because records of the electorate in which TAFE students live are not collected under the Australian Vocational Education and Training Management Information Statistical Standard (AVETMISS).

(9) The New Apprenticeships Incentives Program has been designed to develop a more skilled Australian workforce that delivers long-term benefits for our nation and our international competitiveness. This is achieved by encouraging employers, through financial incentives, to open up genuine opportunities for skills-based training of their employees. The New Apprenticeships...
Incentives program is demand driven and does not allocate funding on a State or regional basis. The 2003-2004 Budget allocated $533.5 million to this programme nationally. My Department is only able to collect records of New Apprenticeship funding by postcode areas and not by electoral divisions.

ATTACHMENT A

Undergraduate students by specified postcode from 1998 to 2002

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ATTACHMENT B
Undergraduate students by specified postcode and selected fields of study from 1998 to 2002

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QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
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Table 4  2001

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Table 5  2002
Immigration: Statistics
(Question No. 2376)

Mrs Irwin asked the Minister representing the Minister for Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs, upon notice, on 10 September 2003:

1. Is he aware of a study by Professor Peter McDonald of the Australian National University which shows that net immigration over the five years to 2002-2003 was overstated by as many as 200,000.

2. Has his department taken steps to improve the accuracy of Australia’s net immigration figures; if so, what measures have been taken.

3. Has his department calculated more accurate figures for the five years to 2002-2003; if so, what are the revised net immigration figures for the five years up to 2002-2003.

Mr Hardgrave—The Minister for Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs has provided the following answer to the honourable member’s question:

1. I am aware of the McDonald study, which builds on an earlier study, commissioned by my Department. In his paper Professor McDonald attempts to quantify the degree to which temporary entrants intending to stay more than a year may be overcounted in net overseas migration statistics in recent years as published by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS).

Since becoming aware of the issue, the ABS has taken a number of steps to alert users. These steps included three published warnings and an ABS Demography Working Paper about the issue of correctly counting travellers who change their intentions. The ABS has advised that any overstatement in net overseas migration and its consequential impact on official estimates of the Australia’s population up to 30 June 2001 is eliminated by the use of the results from the ABS 2001 Census of Population and Housing.

It is unfortunate that media and other reports of permanent and long term overseas arrivals and departures in 2002-03 have not had regard to the explanatory notes and data interpretation advice published by the ABS in their monthly publication Overseas Arrivals and Departures (ABS cat. no. 3401.0).

2. Australia’s net overseas migration figures, of which temporary entrants staying or intending to stay more than a year are a component, are calculated by the Australian Bureau of Statistics and used for estimating the resident population. My Department’s role is to collect and collate the information given by passengers entering or leaving Australia on their passenger cards. The Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs (DIMIA) checks that this data is consistent with data collected by other systems, such as our movements database, and then passes it on to the ABS. DIMIA is assisting the ABS to devise a better methodology to calculate long term movements particularly through advice based on its role in the data collection process. DIMIA has also provided the ABS with additional data backdated to July 1998 which is being used in developing the new methodology to adjust raw passenger movement numbers for subsequent moves and changes in actual travel movements from those intentions advised by passengers on initial arrival or departure.

3. It is the role of the ABS to calculate and publish net overseas migration figures. The ABS is developing a new methodology for this purpose and initial indications are that the net overseas migration total for 2001-02 may be revised down by up to 20,000 (Australian Demographic Statistics, March Quarter 2003 (ABS cat. no. 3101.0), page 5). The ABS is intending to release revised estimates of net overseas migration in its publication Australian Demographic Statistics (ABS cat. no. 3101.0) in December 2003.
 Employment: Assistance Programs
(Question No. 2377)

Mr Albanese asked the Minister for Employment Services, upon notice, on 11 September 2003:

(1) Using the Post Programme Monitoring Survey would the Minister for Employment Services outline the type of employment (permanent, temporary/casual/seasonal, self-employment) obtained by former employment assistance participants over the duration of ESC2.

(2) Could this information be provided for all employment assistance programmes.

Mr Brough—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

The proportion of former employment assistance participants obtaining the various types of employment 3 months after leaving assistance is given in the table below. Analysis of outcomes data in the longer term reveals a general movement from casual to permanent jobs over time.

Work for the Dole is a work experience and mutual obligation programme rather than employment assistance. However, it does get positive outcomes and I have included that data.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Employment</th>
<th>Job Matching</th>
<th>Job Search Training</th>
<th>Intensive Assistance</th>
<th>New Enterprise Incentive Scheme</th>
<th>Work for the Dole</th>
<th>Indigenous Employment Programmes</th>
<th>Transition to Work</th>
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<tr>
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<td>37.0%</td>
<td>32.1%</td>
<td>30.0%</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
<td>30.2%</td>
<td>75.3%</td>
<td>27.5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Temporary, Casual, Seasonal</td>
<td>61.4%</td>
<td>61.5%</td>
<td>59.4%</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
<td>64.8%</td>
<td>23.7%</td>
<td>65.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Employment</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
<td>6.4%</td>
<td>10.6%</td>
<td>85.2%</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
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United Nations: Human Rights Committee
(Question No. 2382)

Mr Danby asked the Minister for Veterans’ Affairs, upon notice, on 11 September 2003:

(1) Is she aware of the ruling by the Human Rights Committee (HRC) of the United Nations in the case of Young v Australia; if so, (a) what are the details of the HRC ruling, and (b) what did the HRC say about section 5E of the Veterans’ Entitlement Act 1986.

(2) Can she confirm that the Act deprived Mr Edward Young of a pension solely on the grounds of his sexual orientation.

(3) Will the Government reconsider Mr Young’s application, as requested by the HRC.

(4) Is she able to say whether the HRC decision is binding in (a) domestic law, and (b) international law.

(5) Is the Government under an obligation to respond to the findings of the HRC; if so, what is the Government’s response.

(6) Is she aware of the statement by the Prime Minister on 24 August 2001 to the effect that he is opposed to discrimination on the basis of sexual preference.

(7) Will she introduce legislation to amend the Act to remove this discriminatory anomaly.

Mrs Vale—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) I am aware that on 6 August 2003 the Human Rights Committee adopted views, under the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights concerning communication 941/2000 submitted on behalf of Mr Edward Young.

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
(a) The Human Rights Committee expressed the view that Australia has violated article 26 of the Covenant by denying the author, Mr Edward Young, a pension under the Veterans’ Entitlements Act 1986 on the basis of his sex or sexual orientation.

(b) With respect section 5E of the Veterans’ Entitlement Act 1986, the Human Rights Committee found that as a same sex partner, Mr Edward Young “did not have the possibility of entering into marriage. Neither was he recognized as a cohabiting partner of Mr. C, for the purpose of receiving pension benefits, because of his sex or sexual orientation.”

(2) Mr Young had sought a pension under the Veterans’ Entitlements Act 1986 on the basis that his deceased partner was a veteran whose death was due to his service in the Australian Defence Force. The principal issue of whether the death was due to service was not addressed. Mr Young was not entitled to make a claim in that he was not a ‘member of a couple’, defined in section 5E of the Veterans’ Entitlements Act 1986, in that he was not a person living with a person of the opposite sex.

(3) Primary responsibility for decisions on the benefit sought by Mr Young are made by the Repatriation Commission according to criteria set out in the Veterans’ Entitlements Act 1986. These criteria are also binding on appeal bodies. As Minister, I have no authority to intervene nor to direct the outcome of any claim under the Veterans’ Entitlements Act 1986.

(4) I understand that views adopted by Human Rights Committee are not binding on Australia in domestic or international law.

(5) The Government has been requested by the Human Rights Committee to provide information about the measures taken to give effect to the views. The Government is currently considering the Committee’s views.

(6) Yes.

(7) As indicated, the Government is considering the Committee’s views. The Government does not acknowledge that Australia has failed to comply with international law.

Veterans: Benefits
(Question No. 2400)

Mr Fitzgibbon asked the Minister for Veterans’ Affairs, upon notice, on 16 September 2003:

(1) How many residents in the electoral division of Hunter currently receive a benefit from the Department of Veterans’ Affairs (DVA).

(2) How many of these DVA benefit recipients currently receive services from Homecare.

(3) Is there a waiting list for Homecare services; if so, (a) how many residents of the electoral division of Hunter are currently on the waiting list, and (b) what is the reason for the waiting list.

(4) How long would a DVA benefit recipient have to wait for Homecare services from the initial request until the service commenced.

(5) How long would a DVA benefit recipient have to wait for a reassessment to increase the services received from Homecare.

(6) What is being done to improve the current waiting times for Homecare services.

Mrs Vale—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) As at 30 June 2003, 2,607 residents in the electoral division of Hunter were in receipt of a benefit from the Department of Veterans’ Affairs.

(2) 1,421 veterans were receiving Veterans’ Home Care (VHC) services.
(3) (a) and (b) The Department of Veterans’ Affairs has been advised by the relevant assessment agency that as at end of August 2003, there were 72 veterans awaiting assessment in this region and 181 veterans assessed and awaiting service allocation. Veterans on a waiting list for assessment are those for whom the assessment agency has made an initial determination of a non-urgent need for assessment. In the Hunter region the assessment and coordination contract has recently been transferred to a new agency which is working to clear this waiting list.

Veterans on a waiting list for services are those who have been assessed but are considered to have a non-urgent need for services, but whom services will commence as soon as resources become available.

(4) VHC services are grouped into two categories - assessment and service provision. All eligible veterans will receive an assessment. After assessment, access to service provision could occur immediately if the need is considered to be urgent — on average this varies from five to ten working days. Veterans may be placed on a waiting list if resources are not immediately available. Whether they are allocated services is dependent on the needs identified, the relative priority of these needs within current demand and the availability of resources in the region. The VHC program is intended to support those veterans and war widows with low level home support needs while having the flexibility to provide a higher level of service where a need is demonstrated. The program is also linked with other Veterans’ Affairs programs, such as community nursing and respite care and other Government and community programs, such as Community Aged Care Packages, Meals on Wheels and residential care, intended to support the community as a whole. In the Hunter region there has been a high demand for services and a number of non-urgent clients have had a delay in service allocation.

(5) VHC recipients receive a six-monthly review of their assessment unless the veteran has a significant change to their needs. Where there is a significant change in circumstances, and the need is identified, similar to part (4) above, access to services could vary from immediate to an average of five to ten working days.

(6) Additional funding of $8.6m has been allocated to VHC in the 2003/2004 Budget to assist in providing additional services.

Australian Sports Commission: Targeted Sport Participation Growth Program
(Question No. 2419)

Mr Murphy asked the Minister representing the Minister for the Arts and Sport, upon notice, on 17 September 2003:

(1) What initiatives is the Australian Sports Commission implementing through national sporting organisations to improve equity of access to participation in sport and organised physical activity among (a) families of low socio-economic status, and (b) families in rural and remote areas in Australia.

(2) How is the effectiveness of these initiatives measured.

(3) Have these initiatives improved equity of access to participation in sport and organised physical activity among (a) families of low socio-economic status, and (b) families in rural and remote areas in Australia; if so, how; if not, why not.

Mr Williams—The Minister for the Arts and Sport has provided the following answer to the honourable member’s question:
(1) (a) The Australian Sports Commission continues to implement the Targeted Sport Participation Growth Program (TSPGP) through national sporting organisations, to deliver increased opportunities for individuals to participate in sport and organised physical activity. A number of the sports involved in the TSGPG conduct programs in known low socio-economic areas.

(b) The Commission works with national sporting organisations to deliver numerous programs that are accessible to families in rural and remote areas. The TSGPG Program, the Indigenous Sport Program, the National Coaching and Official Accreditation schemes and the Disability Education Program (disability sport training workshops) are examples of initiatives that are delivered to communities in rural and remote regions.

(2) The effectiveness of these initiatives is measured in a variety of ways including program evaluations by sports, as part of the ASC Funding and Service Level Agreements, and through participant consultations to ensure that the programs reflect the needs of the communities.

(3) A number of the sports involved in the TSGPG reduce or subsidise program costs that have improved the equity of access to participation in sport and organised physical activity in known low socio-economic areas.

Under the Commission’s Indigenous Sport Program, over 200 initiatives have been implemented throughout rural and remote regions, resulting in improved access to participation in sport and organised activity in these areas.

The growth of the National Coaching Accreditation and National Official Accreditation Schemes across Australia has resulted in more than 50% of the 85,000 accredited coaches and 8,500 accredited officials being registered from within rural and remote areas of Australia.

Improved access to disability sport-related activities has also occurred. The ASC’s Disability Education Program has implemented 40% of disability sport training workshops across regional areas in Australia.

**Family Law**

*(Question No. 2420)*

Ms O’Byrne asked the Attorney-General, upon notice, on 18 September 2003:

(1) How many family law matters are (a) waiting to be listed for pre-hearing conferences, (b) listed for pre-hearing conferences, and (c) listed for trial in (i) northern Tasmania, (ii) southern Tasmania, and (iii) Sydney, in both the Family Court and the Federal Magistracy.

(2) What is the average waiting time for family law matters to be heard in (i) northern Tasmania, (ii) southern Tasmania, and (iii) Sydney, in both the Family Court and the Federal Magistracy.

Mr Ruddock—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

The Family Court of Australia and the Federal Magistrates Court have advised as follows:

(1) The following table sets out the requested information for the Family Court. The figures in the table represent applications for final orders waiting to be heard as at 23 September 2003.

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<td>2</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>149</td>
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</table>

**QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**
[* In the Hobart, Sydney and Parramatta Registries, all cases are immediately set down for pre-trial conference once they enter the determination phase.]

The Federal Magistrates Court does not conduct pre-hearing conferences. For the period 1 July 2002 to 30 June 2003 the number of defended hearings listed in the Federal Magistrates Court in Tasmania (as a whole) was 1,124. This comprises Devonport (359), Launceston (473), and Hobart (292).

With respect to the Sydney central business district, the Federal Magistrates Court does not hear defended hearings. There were 1,484 defended hearings listed in the Court in Parramatta between 1 July 2002 and 30 June 2003.

(2) The relevant waiting times in the Family Court for the 2002/03 financial year are set out in the following table. The figures in the table represent the median elapsed time from filing to disposition for applications for final orders.

<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Northern Tasmania</th>
<th>Southern Tasmania</th>
<th>Sydney</th>
<th>Parramatta</th>
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<td>50th percentile</td>
<td>5.6 months</td>
<td>4.8 months</td>
<td>6.0 months</td>
<td>5.3 months</td>
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The Federal Magistrates Court’s statistics on final orders during the period 1 July 2002 to 30 June 2003 indicate that the average waiting time between filing and finalisation in Federal Magistrates Court family law matters in Launceston was 163 days, in Devonport it was 216 days, and in Hobart 193 days.

The Federal Magistrates Court does not hear matters in relation to family law matters (other than divorce) in Sydney. In Parramatta, during the period 1 July 2002 to 30 June 2003 the average waiting time between filing and finalisation in applications for final orders was 120 days.

**Health: Food Imports**

(Question No. 2425)

Mr McClelland asked the Minister representing the Minister for Health and Ageing, upon notice, on 18 September 2003:

What steps has the Minister taken since 11 September 2001 to implement additional security measures relating to (a) the possible contamination of food imported into Australia, and (b) the possible contamination of Australian food sources by terrorists.

Mr Abbott—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

Our food supply is recognised by government and industry as critical to our national wellbeing. Australia has a robust system of measures to ensure the safety and security of our food supply, including imported products and ingredients. The system is constantly being reviewed and improved in light of new intelligence as it becomes available.

Since 11 September 2001, there has been good reason to re-evaluate existing security systems in Australia to reduce the threat to the food supply from both unintentional and deliberate contamination. Australia’s current systems for detection, surveillance, food recall and general security far exceed the basic systems of safety recommended in a recent report from the World Health Organization on terrorist threats to food.

The Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service (AQIS) manages a surveillance program to monitor food imported into Australia. In addition to this, OzFoodNet, an enhanced system for surveillance of foodborne illness, has the capacity to detect outbreaks which result from deliberate contamination of the food supply. In the event of a known bioterrorist incident, the Department of Health and Ageing has well established coordination and advisory mechanisms to manage any health emergencies. These mechanisms have been developed with State/Territory and other key Australian Government agencies, including AQIS and Emergency Management Australia, and utilise existing national groups such as the...
Communicable Diseases Network Australia and the Australian Health Disaster Management Policy Committee.

While these systems provide Australia with one of the safest food supplies in the world, both government and industry authorities recognise the increased potential threat from deliberate contamination and are not complacent on issues relating to food security. Communication between government and industry has been strengthened by the creation of networks dedicated to addressing intentional and unintentional threats to key sectors of the economy and our community.

The Trusted Information Sharing Network for critical infrastructure protection was established in November 2002, and oversights the activities of these networks including the Food Chain Assurance Advisory Group. The Food Group facilitates the sharing of information about threats, vulnerabilities and treatments between industry and government bodies responsible for safety and security across the entire food chain. Through this network, improvements to incident prevention and response mechanisms can be identified and acted upon, ensuring Australia maintains a secure food supply.

Health: Infrastructure

(Question No. 2426)

Mr McClelland asked the Minister representing the Minister for Health and Ageing, upon notice, on 18 September 2003:

What steps has the Minister taken since 11 September 2001 to ensure that Australia’s health infrastructure is (a) capable of handling the medical consequence of a major terrorist attack, and (b) protected from terrorist attack.

Mr Abbott—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(a) In February 2003, the Australian Health Ministers Advisory Council (AHMAC) established the Australian Health Disaster Management Policy Committee (AHD-MPC). This is an expert and high level multi-jurisdictional mechanism for improving Australia’s preparedness for a national health emergency. Membership includes senior officials from State and Territory health authorities, Defence, Emergency Management Australia, and the Department of Health and Ageing. The committee also has representation from the New Zealand Health Ministry as well as experts in public health, communicable diseases, mental health and emergency services.

The AHD-MPC is overseeing the development of:

• enhanced Australian Government planning mechanisms for developing clinical and technical guidelines relating to the control of biological events;
• improved communicable disease surveillance and control processes including laboratory and clinical detection for smallpox and anthrax, provision of advice to Medical Specialists and General Practitioners and close liaison with international agencies such as the World Health Organization and the US Centres for Disease Control and Prevention; and
• a stocktake of State, Territory and national health response capability.

The AHD-MPC liaises with jurisdictional agencies and the National Counter Terrorism Committee to ensure the integration of health planning with State and Territory disaster plans and the coordination of health resources in an emergency.

At the Australian Health Ministers Conference in July 2002, the Western Australia Health Department was asked to lead the development of a National Burns Strategy. A National Burns Planning and Coordinating Committee (NBPCC) was subsequently established in March 2003. Two working parties were formed, one to develop a major incident response plan for burns...
management and the other to develop national standards and training for burns management services. The results of this work will be completed during 2004.

Health infrastructure is largely the responsibility of State and Territory Governments. However, the Australian Government would have a role if the response required had the potential to overwhelm the health infrastructure of a State or Territory Government. This role would be to coordinate and facilitate a timely and effective national health response. In these circumstances and at the request of a State or Territory Government, Australian Government agencies including Emergency Management Australia would coordinate the broad national emergency response. If warranted, the Department of Health and Ageing would activate its own incident room to coordinate a national health response.

The Department of Health and Ageing has established the Infectious Diseases Emergency Response Group (IDER), which has brought together experts in the fields of communicable diseases, pathology and laboratory sciences and clinical research to address bioterrorism threats. The IDER has helped develop outbreak response guidelines for bio-terrorism agents. The smallpox guidelines are close to finalization and a similar set of guidelines is being developed for anthrax. Experts are currently scoping State and Territory capability and future plans for the early detection and surveillance of a disease outbreak.

Funding in the 2002-03 Federal Budget of $11.4 million was used to establish the National Medicines Stockpile. This will ensure access to appropriate pharmaceuticals in the event of a disease outbreak that overwhelms the resources of a State or Territory Government. Pharmaceuticals in the stockpile will counter a range of biological and chemical agents. The stockpile includes smallpox vaccine, antibiotics, antivirals, and chemical antidotes. This will augment existing pharmaceutical supplies held in the national health system.

(b) All Australian Governments have taken steps to address the protection of Australia’s critical infrastructure since 11 September 2001. These have included counter-terrorism-related measures coordinated by the National Counter-Terrorism Committee, which were reported to the Council of Australian Governments in December 2002. A broader program of Critical Infrastructure Protection (CIP) from an all-hazards perspective is also being developed by the Australian Government, which is addressing the need to protect our critical health infrastructure.

The Trusted Information Sharing Network for Critical Infrastructure Protection (TISN), which was launched in April 2003, is addressing the protection of critical health infrastructure through the creation of a Health Sector Infrastructure Assurance Advisory Group (IAAG).

On 19 September 2003, at the request of the AHD-MPC, the Department of Health and Ageing met with key private health stakeholders and staff from the Australian Attorney-General’s Department, to lay the ground work for establishing a Health Private Sector Infrastructure Assurance Advisory Group. This group will identify and aim to improve the protection of private health infrastructure such as laboratories, hospitals, blood services, pharmaceutical manufacturers and other key private health services.

The health sector is represented on the Critical Infrastructure Advisory Council (CIAC) which has been created to provide advice to the Australian Government on CIP policy. The CIAC reports to the Attorney-General. Through the TISN, and particularly the CIAC, the Health Sector IAAG will work closely with the National Counter-Terrorism Committee and other government and private sector organisations. This will ensure coordination of the wide range of existing strategies, plans and procedures to deal with the prevention, preparedness, response and recovery arrangements for disasters and emergencies, including counter-terrorism.
Family Law
(Question No. 2437)

Mr McClelland asked the Attorney-General, upon notice, on 18 September 2003:

What payments were made to each State and Territory in 2002-2003 in respect of work performed by courts of summary jurisdiction under the Family Law Act 1975 and Child Support Scheme legislation.

Mr Ruddock—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

In 2002-2003, the amounts paid for work performed by courts of summary jurisdiction under the Family Law Act 1975 and Child Support Scheme legislation were as follows:

New South Wales $1,629,967.71
Victoria $599,239.06
Queensland $664,332.84
South Australia $436,089.00

In Western Australia, Commonwealth family law and child support jurisdiction is exercised by the Family Court of Western Australia. The total payment made to Western Australia in respect of federal jurisdiction exercised by the Family Court of Western Australia in 2002-2003 was $9,642,025.

Motor Vehicles: Green Vehicles Guide
(Question No. 2460)

Mr Murphy asked the Minister for Transport and Regional Services, upon notice, on 18 September 2003:

Further to the answer to question No. 2105 (Hansard, 18 August 2003, page 18812), when will the Government’s Green Vehicles Guide be made available to the public.

Mr Anderson—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

It is anticipated that the Green Vehicles Guide will be available early in 2004.

Government Departments: Legal Services
(Question No. 2470)

Mr Murphy asked the Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations, upon notice, on 18 September 2003:

Further to the answers to questions Nos 1620 to 1635 and 1637 (Hansard, 12 August 2003, page 18283) what are the Chief Executive Officers of the Minister’s departments and agencies doing to ensure that they do not retain the services of any barrister or solicitor who has previously been made bankrupt.

Mr Andrews—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

The policy in relation to such matters, which is set out in the letter of 21 March 2001 from the then Attorney-General to all Ministers, is intended to ensure that Commonwealth departments and agencies do not engage barristers who use insolvency as a means of avoiding tax. The policy is not directed at preventing the briefing of all barristers who have been insolvent.

In fulfilling its obligations the department and its portfolio agencies uses solicitors from a panel of firms selected by competitive tender. The department and its portfolio agencies brief barristers through these firms based on recommendations of the firms or on the department’s and its portfolio agencies own knowledge and experience of specific barristers.
Mr Murphy asked the Minister for Education, Science and Training, upon notice, on 18 September 2003:

Further to the answers to questions Nos 1620 to 1635 and 1637 (Hansard, 12 August 2003, page 18283) what are the Chief Executive Officers of the Ministers’ departments and agencies doing to ensure that they do not retain the services of any barrister or solicitor who has previously been made bankrupt.”

Dr Nelson—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

In March 2001, the previous Attorney-General wrote to Ministers of the day asking that their departments and agencies not engage counsel who use insolvency as a means of avoiding paying tax. As this request was restricted to barristers and not to solicitors, my response is therefore restricted to the engagement of barristers.

I have been informed that the Department of Education, Science and Training and other portfolio agencies have the following procedures in place:

The Department of Education, Science and Training’s legal panel of the Australian Government Solicitor, Clayton Utz and Phillips Fox are all aware of the previous Attorney-General’s instruction issued in March 2001. Further, whenever any of these law firms propose to engage barristers on behalf of the Department, the in-house Departmental lawyer who oversees the matter asks the firm to confirm that the barrister has not utilised bankruptcy to avoid taxation responsibilities. In addition, on the rare occasion when the Department retains the services of a barrister directly, the instructing in-house lawyer makes enquiries to ensure that the barrister concerned has not used bankruptcy to avoid paying tax.

The engagement of all barristers by the CSIRO, whether directly or by one of its panel legal firms, must be approved by the CSIRO’s General Counsel, who will not approve such engagements where the barrister concerned has previously been made bankrupt.

The Australian Institute of Marine Science conducts due diligence checks before any barristers are engaged on its behalf by its solicitors.

The Anglo-Australian Telescope Board rarely needs to engage counsel. Whenever it does so, it uses the Australian Government Solicitor which it relies upon to ensure that bankrupt barristers are not retained.

The Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation similarly uses the Australian Government Solicitor, which it relies upon to ensure that bankrupt barristers are not retained on its behalf.

The Australian National Training Authority’s panel solicitors have confirmed that no bankrupt counsel have been instructed on its behalf. Further, the Australian National Training Authority has advised that it is reviewing its legal services contract and will ensure that any new contract will stipulate that bankrupt counsel may not be engaged to do work on its behalf.

The Department of Education, Science and Training has also informed me that it will send out letters to the portfolio agencies named above, reminding them that they should have processes in place to ensure that they do not retain barristers who have utilised bankruptcy to avoid their taxation responsibilities.

The Australian National University has not been included in this response because it operates with a greater deal of autonomy than other portfolio agencies.

Mr Murphy asked the Minister for Industry, Tourism and Resources, upon notice, on 18 September 2003:
Further to the answers to questions Nos 1620 to 1635 and 1637 (Hansard, 12 August 2003, page 18283) what are the Chief Executive Officers of the Minister’s departments and agencies doing to ensure that they do not retain the services of any barrister or solicitor who has previously been made bankrupt.

Mr Ian Macfarlane—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:
The policy in relation to such matters, which is set out the letter of 21 March 2001 from the then Attorney-General to all Ministers, is intended to ensure that Commonwealth departments and agencies do not engage barristers who use insolvency as a means of avoiding tax. The policy is not directed at preventing the briefing of all barristers who have been insolvent. The Department of Industry, Tourism and Resources has written to the major law firms on its legal panel, notifying them that it is a requirement that the issue of bankruptcy be addressed when briefing counsel.

Government Departments: Legal Services
(Question No. 2480)

Mr Murphy asked the Minister for Veterans’ Affairs, upon notice, on 18 September 2003:
Further to the answers to questions Nos 1620 to 1635 and 1637 (Hansard, 12 August 2003, page 18283) what are the Chief Executive Officers of the Minister’s departments and agencies doing to ensure that they do not retain the services of any barrister or solicitor who has previously been made bankrupt.

Mrs Vale—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:
The policy in relation to such matters, which is set out in the letter of 21 March 2001 from the then Attorney-General to all Ministers, is intended to ensure that Commonwealth departments and agencies do not engage barristers who use insolvency as a means of avoiding tax. The policy is not directed at preventing the briefing of all barristers who have been insolvent.
The Secretary of the Department of Veterans’ Affairs relies on advice from the external legal advisers who actually brief the barristers to recommend who is appropriate to represent the Commonwealth of Australian in litigation, having regard to both the barrister’s experience in a particular area of the law and the Legal Services Directions issued by the Attorney-General.
In relation to the engagement of external solicitors, the majority of legal work for the Department is performed by solicitors employed by the Australian Government Solicitor. In relation to the use of other solicitors, the legal panel that is available contains employed solicitors from a number of leading law firms. The Department expects that the issue of whether or not an employed solicitor is an undischarged bankrupt is part of the “due diligence” investigations that are required to be undertaken by a private law firm to ensure that there is no conflict of interest in accepting legal work from the Department and in only providing appropriate solicitors to undertake that work.

Medicare Hotline
(Question No. 2489)

Ms Vamvakinou asked the Minister representing the Minister for Health and Ageing, upon notice, on 18 September 2003:
In respect of the Medicare Hotline, (a) what is the name of the business responsible for running the hotline, and (b) where are the call centres sites and staff located.

Mr Abbott—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:
(a) The Health Insurance Commission (HIC) administers the Medicare program on behalf of the Australian Government. HIC also manages two main enquiry lines for Medicare, one for the public and one for health professionals.
(b) The Call Centre sites and staff servicing these lines are located in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Adelaide, Perth, Hobart and Casuarina (NT).

Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs: Departmental Library

(Question No. 2490)

Ms Vanvakinou asked the Minister representing the Minister for Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs, upon notice, on 18 September 2003:

(1) Is he aware of reports relating to his department’s library appearing in the Canberra Times on 9, 26 and 31 August 2003.

(2) Is it the case that his department obtained the services of an outside librarian and technician to cull the departmental library of material collected prior to 1995; if so, what were the criteria for the culling of items in the library.

(3) Is he aware that the library collection included a unique three-volume set of press releases by the founder of the department, the Rt. Hon. Arthur Calwell and what are the department’s plans for these historical press documents.

(4) Is he, through this process, circumventing the governing policy of de-acquisition for gifts to the public collection.

(5) In respect of reports that surplus material was being offered first to the Migration Museum of Melbourne and then to the National Library, (a) what is the current location of surplus books and materials, (b) what negotiations have taken place or agreements made between the department and the Migration Museum and the National Library over the offer, and (c) what were the protocols negotiated to ensure preservation of the material

(6) What are the department’s plans for the de-acquisition of materials and books rejected by the Migration Museum and the National Library.

Mr Hardgrave—The Minister for Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs has provided the following answer to the honourable member’s question:

(1) I am aware of the reports in the Canberra Times and am pleased to have this opportunity to correct a number of errors which they contained.

(2) It is not the case that an outside librarian and technician were employed to conduct the recent cull of the Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs (DIMIA) library. The librarian concerned is a full time and permanent employee of the DIMIA library of nearly two years standing and at the time of the cull was acting library manager. The technician assisting is also a full time and permanent DIMIA employee.

(3) I am aware that the DIMIA library contains the press releases of the Rt. Hon. Arthur Calwell. These papers have been retained in the library along with any similar items. The approach taken by the cull to such documents is as follows:

- Any documents that relate to the history of the Department or immigration policy will be retained in the DIMIA library. This includes (but is not confined to):
  - all reports by or for the department or the government of the day relating to portfolio responsibilities, regardless of publication date;
  - reports by such bodies as the National Population Council, the Bureau of Immigration Research, the Immigration Advisory Council etc;
  - Immigration conference papers, works by former ministers and relevant academic works.
(4) I am advised that the cull conducted by the DIMIA library has in no way breached any protocols or policies relating to the treatment of gifts to the Commonwealth. No official gifts have been culled from the library.

(5) (a)-(c) Surplus books and materials are being held in the Department until their removal from the catalogue is completed. As an item is removed from the DIMIA catalogue, the National Library of Australia’s holdings are checked. The item will be offered to the National Library if it is not already held there.

Discussions have been held with the National Library, which has indicated that it would not be interested in taking all of the culled material.

(6) After selecting for the National Library and the National Archives, the remainder of the culled material will be offered first to the Maritime Museum in Sydney, which has a national on-line catalogue that would facilitate inter-library loans of the material. The next offer will be to the Migration Museum in South Australia, a well established museum that may be interested in building up its print collection.

If the Maritime Museum or the Migration Museum in South Australia does not require items, they will be offered to the libraries of the Victoria University and the Migration Museum Melbourne. Non-immigration related items (for example self-help books, old computer books etc) which comprise a significant proportion of the older culled material, will be offered to overseas missions, DIMIA staff, other libraries and then Lifeline.

Pan Pharmaceuticals Ltd
(Question No. 2493)

Mr Rudd asked the Minister representing the Minister for Health and Ageing, upon notice, on 18 September 2003:

(1) Did the Minister’s department receive communications between the Australian Embassy in Hanoi and Canberra in 1999, 2000, 2001 or 2002 on concerns raised by the Vietnamese authorities about the quality and content of pharmaceutical products imported from Australia from the Pan Pharmaceutical company or one of its subsidiary/derivative companies.

(2) When were representations made by the Vietnamese authorities to the Australian Embassy about their concerns and what was the nature of their concerns.

(3) What action did the Vietnamese authorities take to the continued sale and distribution of these pharmaceuticals in Vietnam and when.

(4) What were the dates on which these Vietnamese representations to the Australian Embassy in Hanoi were reported to Canberra.

(5) What were the dates on which the Vietnamese government took action against the sale and distribution of Pan Pharmaceutical products and when was this reported to Canberra by the Embassy in Hanoi.

(6) What action did the Minister’s department take in response to the report from the Australian Embassy in Hanoi on the Vietnamese concerns about the quality of the Pan Pharmaceutical products and any action the Vietnamese authorities had taken in relation to Pan Pharmaceuticals.

Mr Abbott—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) (6) The Department is not aware of any such communications or representations between the Australian Embassy in Hanoi and Canberra, raising any such concerns by the Vietnamese authorities.
Mr Laurie Ferguson asked the Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs, upon notice, on 18 September 2003:

(1) Did the registered migration agent Mr Fahmi Hussain (agent number 9361284) have his lawyer’s practising certificate cancelled by the Law Society of NSW on 5 December 2001 on the basis that he had misappropriated client trust monies in excess of $500,000.

(2) Prior to this date, was the Migration Agents Registration Authority (MARA) aware that Mr Hussain’s actual business address was at Dalton Legal, 44 The Boulevarde, Strathfield, NSW and, if not, what was his business address as then registered with MARA.

(3) Did MARA resolve on 1 March 2002 to cancel Mr Hussain’s registration as a migration agent on the basis that he was not a person of integrity or a fit and proper person to give immigration assistance, pursuant to section 290 of the Migration Act; if so, did Mr Hussain subsequently lodge an appeal against MARA’s decision with the Administrative Appeals Tribunal (AAT); if so, what were the grounds of his appeal.

(4) Is there any evidence that Mr Hussain continued to provide immigration assistance to visa applicants in the period between the MARA decision of 1 March 2002 and the withdrawal of his appeal to the AAT on 31 January 2003.

(5) Did MARA at any time after 5 December 2001 take possession of relevant immigration case files held by Mr Hussain; if so, on what date did it do so and how many files were involved.

(6) As at (a) 1 March 2002, and (b) 31 January 2003, was MARA in possession of any complaints against Mr Hussain, other than the original Law Society matter; if so, how many such complaints were received and what was the nature of them.

Mr Hardgrave—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) Yes.

(2) Yes.

(3) On 1 March 2002, the Authority cancelled the registration of Mr Hussain on the basis that he was not fit and proper or a person of integrity. Mr Hussain subsequently appealed the Authority’s cancellation decision to the AAT but did not particularise the grounds for his appeal. He withdrew his appeal on 31 January 2003.

(4) It would not be appropriate for me to comment on individual cases. All allegations of unregistered practise are examined and investigated as appropriate. Where allegations are substantiated a brief may be forwarded by my Department to the Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions for consideration.

(5) The Authority received 8 immigration case files held by Mr Hussain on 14 December 2001.

(6) (a) As at 1 March 2002, the Authority was not in possession of any other complaint against Mr Hussain other than the original Law Society matter.

(b) As at 31 January 2003, the Authority was not in possession of any complaint against Mr Hussain other than the original Law Society matter.
Transport and Regional Services: Security
(Question No. 2504)
Mr Martin Ferguson asked the Minister for Transport and Regional Services, upon notice, on 7 October 2003:

(1) Have laptop computers been lost or stolen from any officer of the department and/or agencies within the portfolio during the 2001-2002 and 2002-2003 financial years; if so, for each year (a) how many have been lost and from what section/division of the Department; (b) how many have been stolen and from what section/division of the Department; (c) what is the total value of these computers; (d) what is the average replacement cost per computer; and (e) have any of these computers been recovered or replaced.

(2) Have the police been asked to investigate any of these incidents; if so (a) how many were the subject of police investigation, (b) how many investigations have been concluded, (c) in how many cases has legal action commenced, and (d) in how many cases has this action been concluded and with what result.

(3) How many of the computers had departmental documents, content or information other than operating software on their hard disc drives, a floppy disc, a CD ROM, or other storage device.

(4) Were any of the departmental documents, content or information on the computers classified for security or any other purpose; if so (a) how many, (b) what was the security classification involved, and (c) how many of these (i) unclassified and (ii) classified documents etc. have been recovered.

(5) Has any departmental disciplinary or other actions been taken in relation to the computers or documents; if so, what are the details.

Mr Anderson—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) During the financial year periods in question:

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<td>Civil Aviation Safety Authority</td>
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National Capital Authority 0
Airservices Australia 0
Civil Aviation Safety Authority 0
Australian Maritime Safety Authority 0

Disciplinary or other action was not required.

Not Applicable

Each case is reviewed on its merits. There has been no finding of misconduct against anyone who was responsible for the safekeeping of any of the stolen laptop computers. Following the theft of 10 laptop computers in the 2001-02 financial year, steel security cables were issued to employees holding a laptop computers. Employees were also reminded to be more careful with the security of the computers. In the 2002-03 financial year, only one laptop computer was reported missing.

Incidents were logged, reported to Police and additional procedural and physical security measures introduced to minimise recurrence. (3) Whilst the hardware has not been recovered, information contained within was recoverable from the agency network. (4)Whilst the hardware has not been recovered, information contained within was recoverable from the agency network.

No disciplinary or other similar action was necessary.

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Ms O’Byrne asked the Minister representing the Minister for Employment Services, upon notice, on 7 October 2003:

(1) Can he provide disaggregated data showing the proportion of all jobseekers who, after completing the various components of IEP, were (a) employed full-time, (b) employed part-time, (c) unemployed, (d) not in the labour force, (e) engaged in another labour market program (by program type), and (f) in education or training.

(2) Can he provide disaggregated data showing the proportion of jobseekers in the electoral division of Bass who, after completing the various components of IEP, were (a) employed full-time (b) employed part-time, (c) unemployed, (d) not in the labour force, (e) engaged in another labour market program (by program type), and (f) in education or training.

Mr Brough—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) Post Programme Monitoring (PPM) outcomes data for IEP participants are shown in the Table below. These data detail the proportions of former participants who were (a) employed full-time, (b) employed part-time, (c) unemployed, (d) not in the labour force, (e) engaged in another labour market program, and (f) in education or training.
These data relate to job seekers who exited assistance between 1 January 2002 and 31 December 2002 with outcomes achieved in the year to end March 2003. Data on the type of program undertaken through further assistance are not available due to small sample sizes.

Table: Outcomes achieved\(^1\) by Indigenous job seekers in the year to end March 2003

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<th>Employed</th>
<th>Employed</th>
<th>Unemployed</th>
<th>Not in the Labour Force</th>
<th>Further Assistance(^3)</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Educa-</th>
<th>Positive Outcomes(^4)</th>
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<td>Part-time</td>
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<td>STEP(^5)</td>
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<td>12.6</td>
<td>52.6</td>
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<td>7.5</td>
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\(^1\): PPM outcomes are measured three months after the job seeker ceases assistance and relate to job seekers who ceased assistance between 1 January 2002 and 31 December 2002 with outcomes achieved by 31 March 2003.

\(^2\): PPM outcomes can only be reliably measured for the Structured Training and Employment Project (STEP) and Wage Assistance (WA) components of the Indigenous Employment Programme.

\(^3\): PPM outcomes for Job Network are disaggregated into Intensive Assistance (IA), Job Search Training (JST) and Job Matching (JM).

\(^4\): Positive outcomes include employment and education/training outcomes and can therefore be less than the sum of employment and education/training outcomes because some job seekers achieve both an employment and an education/training outcome.

\(^5\): Further assistance includes commencements in DEWR funded labour market assistance. Further assistance is not measured for Job Matching and job seekers who do not achieve an employment outcome are treated as either unemployed or not in the labour force.

(2) PPM outcomes for the various components of IEP are not available by electorate due to small sample sizes.

**Child Support Agency: Prescribed Payments**

*(Question No. 2524)*

Mr Price asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, upon notice, on 7 October 2003:

(1) When were prescribed payments for Child Support introduced.

(2) How many and what proportion of payers have utilised prescribed payments for each year of its operation.

(3) How has the Child Support Agency (CSA) publicised the availability of prescribed payments.

(4) Has the CSA undertaken any studies to determine whether or not CSA clients are aware of prescribed payments; if so, what were the results; if not, why not.

Mr Anthony—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) Since 1 July 1999 payers can pay up to 25 per cent of their child support on specified items without requiring the agreement of the payee. The remaining 75 per cent needs to be paid. Specified items include mortgage, school fees, health costs, car and utility expenses.
(2)  

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(3) Prescribed payments are mentioned in the following CSA publications:
- Non-Agency Payments fact sheet (CSA 2757)
- Making payments to the Child Support Agency fact sheet (CSA 3011)
- CSA Assessment Handbook (CSA 1909)
- Objections fact sheet (CSA 2759)
- These publications are available by calling CSA on 131 272 or via the CSA Website, www.csa.gov.au.

CSA also has an online version of the NAP form (CSA 1650) where payers can notify CSA of a prescribed payment.

There is also detailed information and examples of prescribed payments on the CSA Website, http://www.csa.gov.au/parents/nap.htm and in The Guide located in the Legal Section of the CSA Website.


Information on prescribed payments is also provided to CSA clients via the phone, in writing through fact sheets and in person during interviews.

(4) No. However, the growth in utilisation suggests increasing awareness among parents.

**Defence: Property**

(Question No. 2533)

**Mr Kelvin Thomson** asked the Minister for the Environment and Heritage, upon notice, on 7 October 2003:

Will Parks Australia have any role in the ongoing management of Commonwealth land at Point Nepean: if so, (a) what will that role be, and (b) why has it not been referred to in the Department of Defence Tender documents for the lease of Pt Nepean Land.

**Dr Kemp**—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

At this stage Parks Australia does not have a role in the ongoing management of Commonwealth land at Point Nepean. Parks Australia assists the Director of National Parks in the management of Commonwealth reserves established under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (the Act). At this stage no portion of Point Nepean has been established as a Commonwealth reserve under the Act, and therefore the Director has no statutory responsibility for land at Point Nepean. I am pleased to note, however, that 205 hectares of the Commonwealth land will be transferred to the State of Victoria to be incorporated in the adjacent Mornington Peninsula National Park.
Environment: Koolyanobbing Mine
(Question No. 2534)

Mr Kelvin Thomson asked the Minister for the Environment and Heritage, upon notice, on 7 October 2003:
(1) Is it the case that his approval of the Koolyanobbing mine expansion will result in an initial destruction of 30 percent of the plant species Tetratheca Paynterae, followed by a further 20% of this species.
(2) Is this species presently recognised as endangered under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999.
(3) Is it the case that under the 2000 IUCN Red List criteria, if 20 percent of the plants are under imminent threat of destruction the species should moved from endangered to critically endangered.
(4) Will he list the species Tetratheca Paynterae as critically endangered.

Dr Kemp—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:
(1) The approval conditions placed on the Koolyanobbing mine expansion will result in the removal of 30 percent of the plant species Tetratheca paynterae. However, removal of an additional 20 percent of this species will only occur if the proponent, Portman Iron Ore, can meet specific conditions of approval including demonstration in an independent report that adequate recovery mechanisms have been introduced and the first phase of mining has had no significant impact on the remaining plant population.

(2) Yes.

(3) No.

(4) No.

Environment: Fossil Fuel
(Question No. 2536)

Mr Kelvin Thomson asked the Minister for the Environment and Heritage, upon notice, on 7 October 2003:
(1) Can he confirm that the Australian dollar value of fossil fuel and fossil fuel technology exports supported by the Export Finance and Insurance Corporation (EFIC) was (a) $721.6m in 1996, (b) $760m in 1997, (c) $900m in 1998, (d) $773.1m in 1999, (e) $633.5m in 2000, (f) $32.7m in 2001, and (g) $538.9m in 2002; if not, what are the correct figures.

(2) Can he confirm that the value for renewable technology exports supported by the EFIC was (a) $0 in 1996, (b) $23.35m in Photovoltaic Cells for Indonesia and $36.91m for Stand Alone Solar Power Systems in the Philippines, in 1997, (c) $0 in 1998, (d) $7.2m for a Hybrid Energy System for Indonesia, in 1999, (e) $0 in 2000, (f) $0 in 2001, and (g) $0 in 2002; if not, what are the correct figures.

(3) Why has the Government provided support for the export of fossil fuels and fossil fuels technology of about $4 billion, and renewable technology exports of only $67.46 million.

(4) Is it the case that one of the Government’s objection to ratifying the Kyoto Protocol on Climate Change is that it requires industrialised nations to cut their greenhouse gas emissions, but does not require such cuts from developing countries.

(5) Why does the Government allow the policies of the EFIC to lock developing countries into future fossil fuel dependency and greenhouse gas emissions at the expense of the climate.
Dr Kemp—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) EFIC advises me that the figures quoted in Question 1 are very broadly correct, except for the 2001 figure, which should be $327m, not $32.7m.

(2) EFIC advises that these figures are also broadly correct.

(3) The Australian Government has comprehensive support programs in place to foster the export of Australian technology. In addition to support offered through EFIC, the Mandatory Renewable Energy Target program has facilitated the export of solar heater technologies, with just one company, Rheem Australia, exporting 102,000 units over the last five years. Support is also being provided through the Australian Government’s Renewable Energy Action Agenda’s Initiative 3. This program implements a renewable energy export strategy to increase Australia’s share of renewable energy export markets. Members of the Renewable Energy Exporters’ Network undertook a very successful trade mission to Brazil, Chile and Mexico in April 2002. This mission yielded excellent results for all firms involved, generating between $60-80 million of prospective business, with several contracts and memorandums of understanding being signed as a result of the visit.

(4) The Government has decided not to ratify the Kyoto Protocol at present because it is not in Australia’s interest to do so. There is not a clear pathway for commitments by developing countries and the United States has indicated that it will not ratify. Without commitments by all major emitters, the Protocol would deliver only about a 1% reduction in global greenhouse gas emissions. Ratification would also signal to investors that Australia was prepared to expose itself to future binding commitments that could impose costs not faced by neighbouring economies. Australia, however, is still actively working to put in place an effective global response to climate change that includes all major emitters. The Government is committed to meeting Australia’s Kyoto target of limiting emissions to 108% of 1990 levels between 2008 and 2012.

(5) EFIC provides internationally competitive export finance facilities to Australian exporters with export contracts, where funding cannot be obtained from privately owned financial institutions.

Environment: Orange Bellied Parrot
(Question No. 2539)

Mr Kelvin Thomson asked the Minister for the Environment and Heritage, upon notice, on 7 October 2003:

(1) Has the review of the Orange Bellied Parrot Recovery Plan 1998-2002 been completed; if so, when will he make the revised recovery plan public.

(2) Can he confirm that the Orange Bellied Parrot Recovery Plan identifies Swan Island in Victoria as critical habitat.

(3) Will the Minister list Swan Island on the Register of Critical Habitat as part of the Orange Bellied Parrot Recovery Plan.

Dr Kemp—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) The review of the Orange-bellied Parrot Recovery Plan 1998-2002 has been completed. The Victorian Government has taken the lead on drafting the Orange-bellied Parrot Recovery Plan 2003-2007. The draft has been recently completed and will be submitted to my Department for adoption under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999, once consultation with other State Governments has taken place. This cross State consultation is a critical component of the finalisation of the Plan due to the large range of the species and the involvement of other States in the implementation of the Plan.
Monday, 24 November 2003

(2) As the plan has not yet been submitted to me for adoption I am unable to provide an answer to this question.

(3) When making or adopting a recovery plan, I must consider whether to list habitat that is identified in the recovery plan as being critical to the survival of the species or ecological community. I will therefore consider whether to list habitat identified in the Orange-bellied Parrot Recovery Plan on the Register of Critical Habitat when considering the revised plan for adoption.

Environment: Alternative Fuels

(Question No. 2540)

Mr Kelvin Thomson asked the Minister for the Environment and Heritage, upon notice, on 7 October 2003:

(1) Is he aware of work done in the United Kingdom and New Zealand concerning domestic heating with smokeless fuels.

(2) Is he aware of the British standards specifying procedures for testing smoke emissions from manufactured solid fuels for domestic use and for testing the thermal performance of room heaters and convector fires.

(3) What standards, if any, apply in Australia for smoke emissions from solid fuels for domestic use.

(4) Is he able to say if smokeless fuels are available in Australia; if so, where are they available.

(5) What action is the Government taking to promote the use of smokeless fuels.

Dr Kemp—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) Yes. A 2001 report, which examines the use of smokeless fuels in the UK and NZ, was commissioned by Environment Canterbury.

(2) Yes, the British Standard BS 3841 : Part 2 specifies procedures for determining smoke emissions from manufactured fuels. BS 3250 specifies procedures for determining the thermal performance of convection appliances.

(3) The Australian/New Zealand Standard AS/NZS 4013 specifies a method for the determination of particle emissions from solid fuels for domestic use.

(4) My Department is aware of only one supplier, Sunbrix Australia. These fuels are currently available only from Bunnings outlets in Western Australia and South Australia, and Aldi outlets in New South Wales and Victoria.

(5) The Government has not specifically promoted these fuels as they are expensive to purchase, when compared to firewood, and there are very few available woodheater models that burn these fuels smokelessly. These fuels do not burn well on an ash bed, as employed in conventional woodheaters, but require airflow from underneath the fuel bed to burn smokelessly. As a result, the application of these fuels has been generally restricted to braziers.

Environment: Cassowaries

(Question No. 2541)

Mr Kelvin Thomson asked the Minister for the Environment and Heritage, upon notice, on 7 October 2003:

(1) Is he aware that the number of wild cassowaries in Australia is now down to between 600 and 700.

(2) How many cassowaries does the Government estimate exist in Australia in the wild.

(3) What steps is the Government taking to protect Australia’s remaining wild cassowaries.
(4) Is the Government aware that permits are being issued to race cars or motorbikes in the Wet tropics World Heritage area.

(5) Is the Government satisfied that there is no danger to cassowaries from racecars or motorbikes in the Wet Tropics World Heritage area.

**Dr Kemp**—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) No, it is my understanding that cassowary populations are higher than that.

(2) The Wet Tropics Management Authority estimates that around 1200 mature cassowaries are spread across the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area.

(3) The Government provides financial support for the Wet Tropics Management Authority, and for a community based Cassowary Advisory Group, from the Natural Heritage Trust. The Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 specifically provides for the protection of World Heritage values, including cassowaries.

(4) The Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service issues a limited number of permits for private car and bike club rallies. I understand that these activities are generally confined to plantation areas within the Wet Tropics, and that permits are not issued for such activities in sensitive habitat areas. Car and bike rallies are legitimate recreational activities in some areas of the Wet Tropics.

(5) It is my understanding that the greatest threat to cassowaries, from vehicular traffic in the Wet Tropics, arises on the many public roads, which traverse the area, particularly where these are close to high cassowary population areas. Both the Wet Tropics Management Authority and the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service are working closely with local government authorities, in the Wet Tropics area, to reduce the incidence of wildlife mortality on public roads.

**Environment: Wind Energy**

(Question No. 2542)

**Mr Kelvin Thomson** asked the Minister for the Environment and Heritage, upon notice, on 7 October 2003:

(1) Does he support a 12-month moratorium on wind energy developments, as advocated by the Liberal and National Parties in the Victorian Parliament.

(2) Does the Government accept scientific claims that climate change as a result of greenhouse gas emissions is occurring.

(3) Is he able to say whether a moratorium on wind energy developments would add millions of tonnes of greenhouse emissions each year.

**Dr Kemp**—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) The Government is committed to increasing the share of renewable energy within Australia’s energy mix. To this end it enacted the Mandatory Renewable Energy Target (MRET), along with other policy initiatives. The MRET covers wind energy, but is not technology specific. The issue of a proposed moratorium on wind farm developments in Victoria is a matter for that State to determine.

(2) The best scientific advice available to the Government indicates that climate change as a result of greenhouse gas emission is occurring.

(3) There would be no effect on the greenhouse abatement achieved by the MRET because other renewable energy generators can create renewable energy certificates required to meet the annual targets specified in the Renewable Energy (Electricity) Act 2000. The implications for the development of the renewable energy industry in Victoria would need to be assessed.
Environment: Green Turtles
(Question No. 2544)

Mr Kelvin Thomson asked the Minister for the Environment and Heritage, upon notice, on 7 October 2003:

(1) Is he aware of recent modelling by Dr Col Limpus of the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service of the conservation status of Green Turtles.

(2) Is it the case that after modelling a range of scenarios of indigenous hunting, coupled with other sources of mortality, Dr Limpus found that the best case scenario would see the Green Turtle population on the east coast become extinct in 50 years.

(3) Has he recently reviewed the status of the Green Turtle, which is presently listed as vulnerable, under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999.

(4) Has he considered the introduction of a ban on hunting of adult Green Turtles.

Dr Kemp—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) My department is aware that Dr Limpus has been modelling green turtle populations in the Southern Great Barrier Reef.

(2) No, it is not my understanding that Dr Limpus makes any such prediction for the green turtle population on the east coast. However I am advised that Dr Limpus’ analysis indicates that the Southern Great Barrier Reef green turtle population may be in the early stages of decline.

(3) No.

(4) Hunting of green turtles is prohibited under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 except for Indigenous take that occurs in accordance with section 211 of the Native Title Act 1993.

Environment: Migratory Birds
(Question No. 2545)

Mr Kelvin Thomson asked the Minister for the Environment and Heritage, upon notice, on 7 October 2003:

(1) Is he aware of reports that long line fishing kills 300,000 sea birds annually, a third of them albatrosses.

(2) What is the Government’s estimate of the number of sea birds killed annually by long line fishing.

(3) Is he aware of reports from BirdLife International that all 21 species of albatrosses and petrels now face some risk of extinction.

(4) Is he aware of BirdLife International’s concern that albatross numbers are continuing to decline, in particular, that the (a) Atlantic yellow-nosed albatross, near-threatened in 2000, is now endangered; (b) black-browed albatross, near-threatened in 2000, vulnerable last year, is now listed as endangered, and (c) black-footed, sooty and Indian yellow-nosed albatrosses, all listed as vulnerable in 2000 is now listed as endangered.

(5) What action is the Government taking to protect albatrosses and petrels from death due to long-line fishing.

Dr Kemp—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) Yes, I am aware that the number of birds killed each year in longline fisheries has been estimated to number 300,000, and that many of them are albatrosses.
(2) The Australian Government does not have an estimate of the number of sea birds killed around the world annually. Estimating the number of sea birds killed annually by longline fishing would require detailed knowledge on fishing effort throughout the world’s oceans, together with seabird bycatch rates for each fishery and for each season that the fishery operates. These data are not available for many fisheries.

(3) Yes.

(4) Yes.

(5) The incidental catch (or bycatch) of seabirds during oceanic longline fishing operations has been listed as a Key Threatening Process under Commonwealth legislation since 1995. A Threat Abatement Plan has been developed and has operated since 1998, with the objective of reducing seabird by-catch in all fishing areas, seasons or fisheries. The ultimate aim of the threat abatement process is to achieve a zero by-catch of seabirds, especially threatened albatross and petrel species, in longline fisheries.

The Plan aims to significantly reduce the by-catch of seabirds during oceanic longline operations in the Australian Fishing Zone by:
- prescribing the appropriate modifications to fishing practices or equipment (mitigation measures);
- providing for development of new mitigation measures;
- educating fishers and the public; and
- collecting information necessary to improve knowledge of seabird-longline fishery interactions.

A considerable amount of work has been undertaken during the life of the current plan resulting in substantial progress in reducing seabird by-catch in fisheries. Notable achievements include:
- a 90% reduction in the bycatch of albatross over the last 5 years;
- the provision of $1.2 million for the eradication of feral cats which were devastating albatross species on Macquarie Island;
- the introduction of a Recovery Plan in 2001 for all 23 species of albatross and giant petrels that frequent Australian waters;
- development of regulations under the Fisheries Management Act 1991 requiring the use of seabird mitigation measures in pelagic tuna fisheries;
- the development and trial of various mitigation methods has been undertaken. These have provided significant data, not only on the mitigation methods being trialed, but also on the nature and level of seabird interactions in some important Commonwealth fisheries; and
- heightened awareness amongst many fishers, leading to considerable cooperation from fisheries in the development of approaches to avoid seabird mortality and improve the sustainability of their industry.

The Plan also recognises that Australia’s domestic bycatch mitigation strategies should be pursued in international waters and the Exclusive Economic Zones of other Southern Hemisphere nations.

On 6 November 2003 the Australian Government witnessed the ratification of the Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels, the Convention for Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals. This historic Agreement will enter into force in February 2004, and will allow members to implement an action plan to protect critical habitat, control non-native species detrimental to albatrosses and petrels, introduce measures to reduce the incidental catch of seabirds in long-line fisheries, and support research into the effective conservation of albatrosses and petrels.
Other forums where the Australian Government is pursuing protection for albatrosses and petrels include: the Ecologically Related Species Working Group of the Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna; the Convention for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources; and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and its Committee on Fisheries.

To incorporate the substantial improvements in our understanding of seabird bycatch and its mitigation, the threat abatement plan is currently being revised, in consultation with the fishing industry, fisheries managers and non-government conservation organisations.

Environment: Greenhouse Challenge Program
(Question No. 2547)

Mr Kelvin Thomson asked the Minister representing the Minister for the Environment and Heritage, upon notice, on 7 October 2003:

(1) In respect of the Greenhouse Challenge Program, (a) how many Australian companies have signed up to the program, (b) what proportion of Australia’s greenhouse gas emissions do these companies represent, and (c) how many companies have failed to meet the mandatory reporting requirements of the Greenhouse Challenge Program, after having signed up to the program.

(2) Have any companies been “struck off” for failing to meet the reporting requirements; if so, how many.

(3) Is he able to confirm whether the Chinese Government has put in place any restrictions on companies tendering for work on the Beijing Olympics from countries which have not ratified the Kyoto Protocol on Climate Change; if so, what are those restrictions.

Dr Kemp—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

The Greenhouse Challenge Implementation Plan 2003 sets out clearly that companies commit, under the program, to report annually on their greenhouse gas emissions and on their performance in managing these emissions.

(1) (a) 813 Australian companies were members of the Greenhouse Challenge Program as of 30 June 2003. (b) Greenhouse Challenge members have reported emissions that represent around half of Australia’s emissions from the industrial sector. The program covers emissions in key areas across the Australian economy but in particular has excellent coverage of electricity generation, the aluminium industry, integrated clinker and cement supplies and oil and gas extraction. The program’s coverage is also solid in the mining and manufacturing sectors. (c) The Australian Greenhouse Office (AGO) discusses with members the capacity to improve reporting where members are experiencing difficulties with meeting the program’s reporting requirements. In some cases, it has not been possible for members to meet requirements, because of resource constraints or changing business priorities for example, and it has been agreed that these companies withdraw from the program. As at 30 June 2003, around 50 companies had left the program partly on this basis.

(2) See (1)(c) above.

(3) The AGO has sought verification of these claims, and has found no evidence of any restrictions on companies tendering for work on the Beijing Olympics from countries that have not ratified the Kyoto Protocol, or of any policy in China to discriminate against non-parties to the Kyoto Protocol.
Environment: Threatened Species
(Question No. 2551)

Mr Kelvin Thomson asked the Minister for the Environment and Heritage, upon notice, on 7 October 2003:

(1) Has he referred the findings of the Australian Terrestrial Biodiversity Assessment Report 2002 to the Threatened Species Scientific Committee in order to consider new Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act listings.

(2) Is it the case that at the 2001 election the Liberal and National Party Coalition committed to referring the results of the Australian Terrestrial Biodiversity Assessment Report to the Threatened Species Scientific Committee.

(3) Can he confirm that the Threatened Species Scientific Committee has been considering 500 ecological communities since November 2000; if so, why have only two ecological communities been listed under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 in the past two years.

(4) Is listing only two ecological communities in 20 months enough to for the Minister to meet his obligation under section 185 of the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 to take “all reasonably practical steps to amend as necessary… the list… so that it contains in each category all ecological communities that are eligible to be included in that category”.

Dr Kemp—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) Yes.
(2) Yes.
(3) No. Between 16 July 2000 and 30 June 2003, the Threatened Species Scientific Committee received 41 public nominations to list ecological communities and made recommendations to me concerning 38 of these nominated ecological communities: The national list is being maintained in a strategic and scientifically rigorous manner, as required under Section 185 of the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999.

(4) Yes, considering the complexity of assessing national ecological communities and noting 32 decisions have been made regarding ecological communities by the Minister.

Environment and Heritage: Coast Care Week 2002
(Question No. 2552)

Mr Kelvin Thomson asked the Minister for the Environment and Heritage, upon notice, on 7 October 2003:

(1) Can he confirm that a media release issued by the Department of the Environment and Heritage for Coast Care Week 2002 noted that scientific experts recommended the minimum no-take sanctuary zone of 1000 metres around Grey Nurse critical habitat.

(2) Is this minimum no-take sanctuary zone embodied in the Commonwealth Grey Nurse Recovery Plan.

(3) Has he examined the management and zoning proposals for the Cape Byron Marine Park, including proposals for the Julian Rocks area in the middle of the park.

(4) Is he satisfied that the plans for the Marine Park are consistent with the Grey Nurse critical habitat requirements and the Grey Nurse Recovery Plan.

Dr Kemp—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:
(1) Yes, noting that the release posted on the Department’s web site was issued by the NSW Coast Care facilitator, not the Department of the Environment and Heritage.

(2) The Recovery Plan for the Grey Nurse Shark, which was made in June 2002, was based on the best scientific advice available at the time it was made. The Recovery Plan notes “The protection at Pimpernal Rock encompasses a 500 metre radius no-take zone around the site that excludes all types of fishing. The other Grey Nurse Shark aggregation sites in New South Wales and Queensland should be considered for similar protection”. The Shark Recovery Group will be routinely reviewing this in light of the most up to date science.

(3) No.

(4) The Commonwealth Recovery Plan recommends a 500 metre no-take zone. The responsibility for management and planning of New South Wales marine parks rests with that State.

Environment and Heritage: Local Authority Waste Management Advisory Committee

(Question No. 2554)

Mr Kelvin Thomson asked the Minister for the Environment and Heritage, upon notice, on 7 October 2003:

(1) Is he aware of the work of the Local Authority Waste Management Advisory Committee (LAWMAC), comprised of 30 Shires in North Queensland, in endeavouring to recycle and reuse waste tyres.

(2) Has the Government been approached by LAWMAC seeking a meeting of relevant Federal and State Ministers, local Members of Parliament and Industry representatives with a view to establishing a regional cooperative approach to this issue; if so, what was the Government’s response.

(3) What steps is the Government taking towards the best practice management and handling of waste tyres.

(4) Does the Government support the concept of extended producer responsibility in relation to waste tyres.

Dr Kemp—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) Yes.

(2) Yes, LAWMAC wrote to me on 19 September 2003 to suggest such a meeting. Responding on my behalf, my Department advised LAWMAC that State and Territory Environment Ministers were already developing a national response to waste tyres through the Environment Protection and Heritage Council (EPHC), which I Chair. The Australian Local Government Association participates on the Council as an observer. My Department also forwarded a copy of the EPHC paper A National Approach to Waste Tyres: Policy Discussion Paper to LAWMAC.

(3) The Government is working with the States and Territories and the tyre industry to develop a national response to waste tyres based on product stewardship principles.

(4) See answer to question (3).

Environment: Threatened Species

(Question No. 2555)

Mr Kelvin Thomson asked the Minister for the Environment and Heritage, upon notice, on 8 October 2003:
(1) Has he received advice from the Environment Australia scientific advisory committee that the Queensland lungfish which inhabits the Burnett River should be recommended for threatened species listing; if so, (a) when did he receive this advice, (b) what was his subsequent decision, and (c) is he able to say what impact the Burnett River (Paradise) dam project would have on this species.

(2) Has any advice that he has received on the possible listing of the Queensland lungfish been publicly released.

(3) Does failure to release the advice of the scientific advisory committee constitute a contravention of the 90-day allowable limit provided for in the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999.

Dr Kemp—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) Yes.
   (a) I received advice from the Threatened Species Scientific Committee on the eligibility of listing the Australian Lungfish under the EPBC Act on 4 December 2002.
   (b) I decided to list the Australian Lungfish as a Vulnerable species under the EPBC Act.
   (c) The conditions I imposed, subsequent to the listing, to build and operate the Burnett River Dam together with the mitigating measures committed to by the proponent, will ensure the proposal has no significant impact on the long-term survival of the species.

(2) Yes.

(3) No.

Environment and Heritage: Malabar Headland
(Question No. 2556)

Mr Kelvin Thomson asked the Minister for the Environment and Heritage, upon notice, on 8 October 2003:

(1) What studies has the Government made of the environment and heritage value of the 177 hectares of former Department of Defence land at Malabar Headland.

(2) Are there any threatened, vulnerable or endangered species at Malabar Headland.

(3) Is he able to say whether the Government intends to dispose of property at Malabar Headland; if so, what steps is he taking to ensure that the environmental and heritage qualities of this property are safeguarded.

Dr Kemp—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) I am advised that the Department of Finance and Administration commissioned the following reports on the environment and heritage value of the former Defence Department land at Malabar Headland:


(2) I am advised that no Commonwealth listed threatened, vulnerable or endangered species have been recorded at Malabar Headland.

(3) No. This question would be better directed to the Minister for Finance and Administration.
Throsby Electorate: Child-Care Centres
(Question No. 2562)

Ms George asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, upon notice, on 8 October 2003:

(1) How many community-based childcare centres are there in the electoral division of Throsby and what are their names and addresses.

(2) How much Commonwealth funding did each centre receive in (a) 2001-2002, and (b) 2002-2003.

(3) Have any childcare centres been overpaid; if so, how much money has each centre that received an overpayment being asked to repay.

Mr Anthony—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) There are 35 community-based child care services in the electorate of Throsby. The name and addresses of the services are detailed below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>ADDRESS</th>
<th>SERVICE TYPE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ALBION PARK COMBINED OUTSIDE SCHOOL HOURS CARE</td>
<td>CNR TONGARRA RD &amp; HAMILTON RD, ALBION PARK, 2527</td>
<td>ASC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALBION PARK VACATION CARE</td>
<td>CNR TONGARRA RD &amp; HAMILTON RD, ALBION PARK, 2527</td>
<td>VAC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALUNGA CHILD CARE CENTRE</td>
<td>32 ROBYN RD, ALBION PARK RAIL, 2527</td>
<td>LDC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BALARANG COMBINED OUTSIDE SCHOOL HOURS CARE</td>
<td>GOVERNMENT RD, OAK FLATS, 2529</td>
<td>ASC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BALARANG VACATION CARE</td>
<td>GOVERNMENT RD, OAK FLATS, 2529</td>
<td>ASC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BARNARDO’S ILLAWARRA CHILDRENS FAMILY CENTRE (AFTER SCHOOL CARE)</td>
<td>5 GREENE ST, WARRAWONG, 2502</td>
<td>ASC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BARNARDO’S ILLAWARRA CHILDRENS FAMILY CENTRE (BEFORE SCHOOL CARE)</td>
<td>5 GREENE ST, WARRAWONG, 2502</td>
<td>BSC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BARNARDO’S ILLAWARRA CHILDRENS FAMILY CENTRE (VACATION CARE)</td>
<td>5 GREENE ST, WARRAWONG, 2502</td>
<td>VAC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BARRACK HEIGHTS CHILD CARE CENTRE (OCCASIONAL CARE)</td>
<td>CNR CARRINGTON ST &amp; TAMARIND PL, BARRACK HEIGHTS, 2528</td>
<td>OCC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BARRACK HEIGHTS CHILDRENS CENTRE (LONG DAY CARE)</td>
<td>CNR CARRINGTON ST &amp; TAMARIND PL, BARRACK HEIGHTS, 2528</td>
<td>LDC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BARNADOS CHILDRENS COMMUNITY PROGRAM BERKELEY SERVICE – AFTER SCHOOL CARE</td>
<td>CNR FLAGSTAFF RD &amp; GEORGE ST, BERKELEY, 2506</td>
<td>ASC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BARNARDS CHILDRENS COMMUNITY PROGRAM BERKELEY SERVICE - BEFORE SCHOOL CARE</td>
<td>CNR FLAGSTAFF RD &amp; GEORGE ST, BERKELEY, 2506</td>
<td>BSC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAME</td>
<td>ADDRESS</td>
<td>SERVICE TYPE</td>
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<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BARNARDOS CHILDRENS COMMUNITY PROGRAM – VACATION CARE</td>
<td>CNR FLAGSTAFF RD &amp; GEORGE ST, BERKELEY, 2506</td>
<td>VAC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRINGILA NEIGHBOURHOOD CHILDRENS HOUSE</td>
<td>1 GORRELL ST, CRINGILA, 2502</td>
<td>LDC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DAPTO CHILDREN'S CENTRE</td>
<td>103-105 PRINCES HWY, DAPTO, 2530</td>
<td>LDC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HILLVIEW CHILD CARE CENTRE</td>
<td>PORT KEMBLA CAMPUS, COWPER ST, WARRAWONG, 2502</td>
<td>LDC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ILLAWARRA FAMILY DAY CARE SCHEME SOUTH - NO. 1</td>
<td>15 BAAN BAAN ST, DAPTO, 2530</td>
<td>FDC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KEMBLAWARRA CHILD AND FAMILY CENTRE</td>
<td>30 HOSKINS AVE, KEMBLAWARRA, 2505</td>
<td>LDC</td>
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<tr>
<td>KEMBLAWARRA VACATION CARE</td>
<td>KEMBLAWARRA RD, KEMBLAWARRA, 2505</td>
<td>VAC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KONINDERIE CHILD CENTRE</td>
<td>222 PRINCES HWY, ALBION PARK RAIL, 2527</td>
<td>LDC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KOONAWARRA CHILDREN'S CENTRE</td>
<td>LOT 222 KURRAWA CRES, KOONAWARRA, 2530</td>
<td>ASC</td>
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<tr>
<td>KOONAWARRA KRAFTY KIDS (AFTER SCHOOL CARE)</td>
<td>KOONAWARRA COMMUNITY CENTRE, FOWLERS RD, KOONAWARRA, 2530</td>
<td>ASC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KOONAWARRA KRAFTY KIDS (BEFORE SCHOOL CARE)</td>
<td>KOONAWARRA COMMUNITY CENTRE, FOWLERS RD, KOONAWARRA, 2530</td>
<td>BSC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KOONAWARRA KRAFTY KIDS (VACATION CARE)</td>
<td>KOONAWARRA COMMUNITY CENTRE, FOWLERS RD, KOONAWARRA, 2530</td>
<td>VAC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LAKELANDS OUT OF SCHOOL HOURS CARE</td>
<td>LAKELANDS PUBLIC SCHOOL, LAKELANDS DR, DAPTO, 2530</td>
<td>ASC</td>
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<tr>
<td>NOOGALEEK CHILD CARE CENTRE</td>
<td>WINNIMA WAY (CNR DENNIS ST), BERKELEY, 2056</td>
<td>MAC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SHELLHARBOUR AFTER SCHOOL CARE</td>
<td>MUNMORAH WAY, FLINDERS, 2529</td>
<td>ASC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SHELLHARBOUR KiAMA FAMILY DAY CARE INC.</td>
<td>2 WILGA CL, ALBION PARK, 2527</td>
<td>FDC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SHELLHARBOUR VACATION CARE</td>
<td>MUNMORAH WAY, FLINDERS, 2529</td>
<td>ASC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WALLAROO CHILD CARE CENTRE</td>
<td>GLIDER AVE &amp; WALLAROO DR, BLACKBUTT, 2529</td>
<td>LDC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WALLAROO CHILD CARE CENTRE (OCCASIONAL CARE – NEIGHBOURHOOD MODEL)</td>
<td>GLIDER AVE &amp; WALLAROO DR, BLACKBUTT, 2529</td>
<td>OCC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WARILLA CHILD CARE CENTRE</td>
<td>CNR KING ST AND HARVEY ST, WARILLA, 2528</td>
<td>LDC</td>
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<tr>
<td>WARILLA OCCASIONAL CARE CENTRE</td>
<td>2-14 BELFAST AVE, WARILLA, 2528</td>
<td>OCC</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
The amount of Commonwealth Child care Broadband funding received by active community-based child care services in the electoral division of Throsby for (a) 2001-02 and (b) 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 (CCB) or Child care 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>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>ADDRESS</th>
<th>SERVICE TYPE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WARRAWONG VACATION CARE</td>
<td>COWPER ST, WARRAWONG, 2502</td>
<td>VAC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BARNARDOS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WARRAWONG CHILDRENS HOUSE</td>
<td>99 SHELLHARBOUR RD, PORT KEMBLA, 2505</td>
<td>LDC</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: ASC – After School Care, BSC – Before School Care, FDC – Family Day Care, LDC – Long Day Care, MAC: Multi-functional aboriginal child care, OCC: Occasional Care, VAC – Vacation Care.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>TYPE</th>
<th>FUNDING 2001-02</th>
<th>FUNDING 2002-03</th>
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<td>ALBION PARK COMBINED OUTSIDE SCHOOL HOURS CARE</td>
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<td>$0</td>
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<td>BALARANG COMBINED OUTSIDE SCHOOL HOURS CARE</td>
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<td>$11 713</td>
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<td>$6643</td>
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<td>ASC</td>
<td>$25 010</td>
<td>$28 243</td>
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<td>BARNARDO’S ILLAWARRA CHILDRENS FAMILY CENTRE (BEFORE SCHOOL CARE)</td>
<td>BSC</td>
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<td>$15 168</td>
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<td>BARNARDO’S ILLAWARRA CHILDRENS FAMILY CENTRE (VACATION CARE)</td>
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<td>$22 778</td>
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<td>BARRACK HEIGHTS CHILD CARE CENTRE (OCCASIONAL CARE)</td>
<td>OCC</td>
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<td>BARRACK HEIGHTS CHILDRENS CENTRE (LONG DAY CARE)</td>
<td>LDC</td>
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<td>KEBMLAWARRA CHILD AND FAMILY CENTRE</td>
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<td>KONINDERIE CHILD CENTRE</td>
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<td>$4612</td>
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<td>NOOGALEEK CHILD CARE CENTRE</td>
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<td>SHELLHARBOUR KIAMA FAMILY DAY CARE INC.</td>
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<td>WALLAROO CHILD CARE CENTRE (OCCASIONAL CARE – NEIGHBOURHOOD MODEL)</td>
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<tr>
<td>WARILLA CHILD CARE CENTRE</td>
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<td>WARRAWONG VACATION CARE BARNARDOS</td>
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<td>WARRAWONG CHILDRENS HOUSE</td>
<td>LDC</td>
<td>$321</td>
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</table>

Note: ASC – After School Care, BSC – Before School Care, FDC – Family Day Care, LDC – Long Day Care, MAC: Multi-functional aboriginal child care, OCC: Occasional Care, VAC – Vacation Care.

(3) 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 with child care centres as part of this ongoing process. If the Member for Throsby would like more information on the CCB advance/acquit process I would be happy to provide the information. There have been 20 Commonwealth funded child care centres in the electorate of Throsby overpaid. The amounts overpaid are Child care Assistance debts. The total amount of Child care Assistance that these 20 centres were being asked to repay as at 28 October 2003 was $112 087.93. However, as the Honourable Member would appreciate information about child care centres’ debts to the Commonwealth is commercially sensitive. The public disclosure of such information could have adverse commercial consequences for these services.

Reserve Bank of Australia: Perth Regional Office
(Question No. 2565)

Ms Jann McFarlane asked the Treasurer, upon notice, on 8 October 2003:

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
(1) When did the Reserve Bank of Australia close its branch in Perth.
(2) When did the Reserve Bank of Australia open its Regional Office in Perth.
(3) What service does a Regional Office offer to the general public.
(4) How can members of the public purchase Australian Government bonds.
(5) How many full-time equivalent (FTE) positions were there at the Reserve Bank of Australia’s branch in Perth.
(6) How many FTE positions are there at the Reserve Bank of Australia’s Regional Office in Perth.

Mr Costello—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) The branch closed to Banking customers on 29 February 2000. (Cash services closed on 28 April 2000.)
(3) These services are detailed in the Reserve Bank of Australia’s 2003 Annual Report “The RBA in the Community” on pages 51 to 54. The Annual Report was tabled on 10 September 2003.
In brief, the Regional Offices liaise with the local business community and State-based economic agencies to gather economic intelligence which informs the Reserve Bank of Australia’s assessment of economic conditions. The Offices also have a representation role designed to enhance channels of communication between the Reserve Bank of Australia and the broader community. In terms of representation, the Regional Offices are the first point of contact with the general public in their States and field a large number of inquiries about the role of the Reserve Bank of Australia, economic statistics and monetary policy decisions. Regional Office staff also give presentations to the public on current economic conditions and the framework for monetary policy while a more substantive form of representation comes through the periodic hosting at the Regional Offices of Board meeting and through regular presentations on the Reserve Bank of Australia’s Quarterly Statement on Monetary Policy.
(4) Members of the public can buy Australian Government bonds through licensed financial services providers. A number of entities specialise in buying and selling government securities.
Members of the public can also buy selected series of Australian Government bonds from the Reserve Bank of Australia through the Bank’s Small Parcel Facility. The Reserve Bank of Australia can be contacted via mail or a toll-free telephone number or e-mail, and details of the Facility and an application form will be posted to the applicant. The completed application form, along with a personal cheque or a bank cheque, can be mailed back to the Registry for Commonwealth Government Inscribed Stock at the Reserve Bank of Australia in Sydney or Canberra.
(5) At the time of closure there were 32 positions (this includes 29 in banking/note issue and three in facilities management).
(6) Three.

Health: Prescription Medicines
(Question No. 2567)

Mr Murphy asked the Minister for Health and Ageing, upon notice, on 8 October 2003:
Are manufacturers of prescription medicines sold in Australia required to include written warnings of possible or common side effects on the packaging of prescription medicines; if so, how is the compliance with this requirement policed; if not, why not.

Mr Abbott—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:
Yes. It is a condition of registration that sponsors of prescription medicines provide information to both health professionals and patients about their medicines in the form of Prescribing Information (PI) and Consumer Medicine Information (CMI) leaflets. The PI contains information for health professionals to allow them to prescribe and dispense medicines appropriately and includes, but is not limited to, warnings and descriptions of side effects of that medicine.

The CMI sets out in lay terms the description of the medicine, how it works, how to take it and when not to take it. It contains important information on major known adverse reactions and side effects, including which side effects you may expect and which side effects you must report immediately to your doctor. The CMI also contains information on contraindications associated with the medicine and interactions with other drugs.

The CMI is an important tool for providing information to patients, but is not intended to replace the professional input from the medical practitioner and the pharmacist in prescribing and dispensing medicine.

The CMI may be included as package inserts, but the Government has encouraged their distribution electronically at the point of dispensing, where the pharmacist as a health professional is available to answer any questions arising.

The Australian Government provides assistance to pharmacists to facilitate this occurring. However, the Australian Government can not compel health professionals to supply CMI documents.

**Trade: Free Trade Agreement**  
(Question No. 2580)

Mr Murphy asked the Minister for Trade, upon notice, on 8 October 2003:

2. Can the Minister confirm whether US free trade negotiators have asked Australian officials for information on how Australian patent and intellectual property rules affect US pharmaceutical companies; if not, why not.
3. Can the Minister confirm whether US negotiators or US pharmaceutical companies are targeting the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) price control mechanisms as part their Australia-United States Free Trade Agreement (AUSFTA) negotiations; if not, why not.
4. Will the proposed AUSFTA threaten the PBS; if so, how; if not, why not.
5. Can the Minister guarantee that the PBS will be exempted from any further AUSFTA negotiations; if not, why not.
6. Can the Minister guarantee that any final AUSFTA will not undermine the PBS and lead to increases in the price of essential medicines; if so, how; if not, why not.

Mr Vaile—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

1. Yes
2. Yes
3. To date there have been several information exchanges in regard to the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme and its place as an essential component of our health care system and National Medicines Policy. While public comments from United States (US) officials have indicated that this is an area that may be raised in negotiations, to date no proposals have been made to Australia by the US on this issue.

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
(4) No. The Government has said from the beginning of negotiations that it will ensure that its ability to provide affordable medicines to Australians through a sustainable Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) will not be affected by the Free Trade Agreement (FTA).

(5) The Government is committed to ensuring that outcomes from the FTA do not impair Australia’s ability to meet fundamental policy objectives in health care. However, this does not mean that we should refuse to discuss any aspect of governmental regulation that impinges upon the issue. For negotiations to be constructive, each party must be allowed to explain its point of view on matters that it considers relevant.

(6) The Government has said from the beginning of negotiations that it will ensure that its ability to provide affordable medicines to Australians through a sustainable Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) will not be affected by the Free Trade Agreement (FTA).

**Environment and Heritage: Assessment Approach Decisions**

*(Question No. 2586)*

Mr Kelvin Thomson asked the Minister for the Environment and Heritage, upon notice, on 13 October 2003:

(1) In respect of the statement on page 182 of the Department of the Environment and Heritage report for 2001-2002 that there were five decisions on assessment approach under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act which were not made within the statutory timeframes, which decisions were not made within the statutory timeframes.

(2) In respect of the statement in the Department of the Environment and Heritage report for 2001-2002 that there were nineteen late decisions on whether an action required approval pursuant to the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act, what are the details of the late decisions and the reasons why these decisions were not made on time.

(3) In respect of the statement on page 182 of the Department of the Environment and Heritage report for 2001-2002 that there were three guidelines for the content of a public environment report or environmental impact statement which were outside the 20 day statutory day timeframe, which matters were outside the 20 day statutory timeframes.

Dr Kemp—The following answer is provided to the honourable member’s question:

(1) Table 1 shows the proposals for which decisions on assessment approach were late in the period 2001-2002. The number of days late is shown in business days.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EPBC Reference</th>
<th>Project Description</th>
<th>Date Decision Made</th>
<th>Date Decision Due</th>
<th>Days Late</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2002/543</td>
<td>Sydney Ports Corporation: Expansion of Port Botany facilities</td>
<td>18/02/2002</td>
<td>15/02/2002</td>
<td>1</td>
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</table>
(2) Table 2 shows the proposals for which decisions on whether the action is a controlled action were late during 2001-2002. The number of days late is shown in business days.

As noted in the Department of the Environment and Heritage report for 2001-2002, the 19 late decisions represents 6 per cent of the total number of decisions in this category for the year. The average number of late days for the year was 2 business days.

The performance audit report *Referrals, Assessments and Approvals under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (Australian National Audit Office, Audit Report No.38, 2002-2003) found that the timeliness of decision-making during 2001-2002 was generally in accordance with the time frames specified in the Act, and an improvement on the previous year. This trend has continued into 2002-2003 during which the number of late referral decisions further declined to less than 5 per cent.

The reasons for late decisions include the need to seek legal advice related to jurisdictional and other issues raised by some referrals, the need to address complex issues raised by technical aspects of referrals or related to taxonomic identification of species of concern, and the unexpected absence of key technical staff or decision-makers due to travel or other commitments.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EPBC Reference</th>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Date Decision Made</th>
<th>Date Decision Due</th>
<th>Days Late</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2002/544</td>
<td>Japan Institute of Space: Asteroid sampler re-entry vehicle recovery at Woomera, SA</td>
<td>14-May-02</td>
<td>13-May-02</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002/599</td>
<td>Defence: Headquarters Australian Theatre at Bungendore, NSW</td>
<td>20-Mar-02</td>
<td>19-Mar-02</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002/556</td>
<td>Mawland Hotel Management Pty: Works at Quarantine Station at North Head, Sydney</td>
<td>27-Feb-02</td>
<td>26-Feb-02</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001/477</td>
<td>Comalco Smelter Development Pty Ltd and Boyne Smelters Limited: Aluminium Smelter Expansion, Gladstone, Qld</td>
<td>16-Nov-01</td>
<td>15-Nov-01</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001/478</td>
<td>Australian Silicon Ltd: Wood Processing and Metallurgical Carbon Facility, Broulee, NSW</td>
<td>16-Nov-01</td>
<td>15-Nov-01</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001/460</td>
<td>Powerlink Queensland: Stanwell to Broadsound Transmission Line, Qld</td>
<td>9-Nov-01</td>
<td>2-Nov-01</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001/429</td>
<td>Catholic Education Office, Diocese of Parramatta: Xavier College Development</td>
<td>3-Oct-01</td>
<td>2-Oct-01</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001/421</td>
<td>Homestake Gold of Australia: Lake Cowal Gold Project, NSW</td>
<td>29-Sep-01</td>
<td>26-Sep-01</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001/404</td>
<td>Australian Sea Urchins Pty Ltd: Aquaculture Facility at Corio Bay, Vic</td>
<td>15-Sep-01</td>
<td>14-Sep-01</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001/243</td>
<td>VicRoads: South Gippsland Highway Realignment at Loch Beno, Vic</td>
<td>16-Sep-01</td>
<td>7-Sep-01</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001/302</td>
<td>Telstra: Sale of New South Head Road, Edgecliffe, NSW</td>
<td>7-Aug-01</td>
<td>6-Aug-01</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001/345</td>
<td>Defence: Sonar/Acoustic Trials in Timor Sea</td>
<td>5-Aug-01</td>
<td>1-Aug-01</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001/342</td>
<td>ANSTO: Lucas Heights Waste Treatment and Packaging Building, NSW</td>
<td>5-Aug-01</td>
<td>31-Jul-01</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
(3) Table 3 shows the proposals for which decisions on guidelines were late in the period 2001-2002. The number of days late is shown in business days.

Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EPBC Reference</th>
<th>Project Description</th>
<th>Date Decision Made</th>
<th>Date Decision Due</th>
<th>Days Late</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2001/434</td>
<td>Department of Transport and Regional Services: Christmas Island Airport Expansion (EIS Guidelines)</td>
<td>28/02/2002</td>
<td>6/02/2002</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Centrelink: Job Search Kiosks
(Question No. 2593)

Mr Albanese asked the Minister for Employment Services, upon notice, on 13 October 2003: Would he provide details on the location of all JobSearch Kiosks (eg Job Network offices, Centrelink offices, etc).

Mr Brough—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

As at 31 October 2003, there were 1,945 JobSearch kiosks located in Job Network offices, 1,674 Touch Screen Units in Centrelink offices, 11 Touch Screen Units in Indigenous Employment Centres and 26 Touch Screen Units in other locations (such as Community Work Coordinators, Youth and Migrant Centres and Rural Transaction Centres) throughout Australia.

Employment: Trainees and Apprenticeships
(Question No. 2594)

Mr Albanese asked the Minister for Education, Science and Training, upon notice, on 13 October 2003: How many trainees and apprentices were employed by each Commonwealth Government department, agency and government owned corporation in (a) 1995, (b) 1996, (c) 1997, (d) 1998, (e) 1999, (f) 2000, (g) 2001, and (h) 2002.

Dr Nelson—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:
According to the Department of Education Science and Training’s (DEST) Training and Youth Internet Management System (TYIMS) database, between 1998 and 2002, 5,151 New Apprentices commenced a New Apprenticeship with employers with an Australian and New Zealand Standard Industrial Classification (ANZSIC) code of 8111 – Central Government Administration or code 8200 – Defence. These ANZSIC codes do not disaggregate further, but cover organisations such as Australian Government Departments, Agencies such as Centrelink and the Defence Forces. Reliable data is not is not available from TYIMS prior to 1998. The following table shows these commencements by calendar year:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ANZSIC Code</th>
<th>1998</th>
<th>1999</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2002</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8111 – Central Government Administration</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>424</td>
<td>1,515</td>
<td>790</td>
<td>3,052</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8200 – Defence</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>333</td>
<td>746</td>
<td>940</td>
<td>2,099</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>174</td>
<td>229</td>
<td>757</td>
<td>2,261</td>
<td>1,730</td>
<td>5,151</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This data should be treated as indicative only and does not necessarily encompass all trainees and apprentices employed by each Australian Government department, agency and government owned corporation. As there are some 300,000 employer records on TYIMS, DEST is unable to sort through this list manually to identify Australian Government organisations.

**Foreign Affairs: Burma and Thailand**

(Question No. 2595)

Mr Kerr asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs, upon notice, on 13 October 2003:

1. What is the status of the Magsaysay award won by Dr Cynthia Maung of the Mae Tao Clinic.
2. What work is undertaken by that clinic, who does it serve and what is its importance.
3. Does the Australian Government support the clinic’s work.
4. Is he aware of threats to deport the clinic’s medical staff.
5. Will he make representations to the Thai and Burmese governments objecting to any steps that would adversely affect the Mae Tao Clinic’s medical staff; if not, why not.

Mr Downer—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

1. Dr Cynthia Maung received the Ramon Magsaysay Award for Community Leadership in 2002. Community leadership is one of six categories of awards presented annually by the Philippines-based Ramon Magsaysay Foundation, a non-profit organisation established in 1957 by the trustees of the Rockefeller Brothers Fund to commemorate the third Philippines President, Ramon Magsaysay. The awards honour individuals and organisations in Asia that have achieved distinction in their respective fields. Since 1958, Magsaysay awards have been presented to 15 institutions and 214 individuals.

2. The Mae Tao Clinic was opened by Dr Cynthia Maung in 1988 in Mae Sot, a small village on the Thai-Burma border. Its five doctors and approximately 120 staff provide medical assistance to Thai villagers and Burmese refugees and displaced persons. The Clinic houses, inter alia, an out patient department, reproductive health care and family planning clinic as well as a trauma and prosthetics department for landmine victims. It also provides education programmes aimed at preventing the spread of disease and HIV/AIDS. The Clinic provides free comprehensive health services to about thirty thousand people a year.

3. The Australian Government currently provides no financial support to the Clinic.

4. I am aware of recent media reports claiming that Dr Cynthia Maung and members of her medical staff had been threatened with deportation. The Australian Embassy in Bangkok has checked these
reports with the Clinic, which advises that they are unfounded. The Clinic has advised the Embassy that it is functioning normally and not experiencing difficulties with Thai authorities.

(5) No – see answer to (4).

**Foreign Affairs: Taiwan**  
(Question No. 2600)

Mr Danby asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs, upon notice, on 14 October 2003:

(1) Further to the answer to question No. 2373 (*Hansard*, 13 October 2003, page 21285), is he aware of reports in *Ha’aretz* of 5 October 2003 that Iranian hackers have attempted to disrupt Israeli electricity supplies by hacking into the Israel Electric Corporation’s computers.

(2) Can Australian diplomatic posts in Israel confirm whether key Israeli infrastructure has been under cyber attack from Iran.

(3) Is he able to say whether the Iranian hackers have the support of the Iranian government.

(4) Has he received any approaches from Israeli officials about these cyber attacks.

(5) Has he made any approaches to Iranian officials about these cyber attacks.

Mr Downer—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) Yes, the report was contained in the English version of *Ha’aretz* on 3 October.

(2) No.

(3) No.

(4) No.

(5) No.

**Citizenship**  
(Question No. 2607)

Mr Laurie Ferguson asked the Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs, upon notice, on 15 October 2003:

(1) Is he correctly quoted in *The Sunday Telegraph* of 7 September 2003 as foreshadowing a ‘campaign of mild harassment’ to pressure long-time permanent residents holding British and New Zealand citizenship to take out Australian citizenship.

(2) Does the Government propose to (a) shorten the renewal period for resident return visas issued to eligible non-citizens, and (b) deny consular assistance to Australian residents who have not taken out Australian citizenship; if so, what is the commencement date for these changes.

(3) How many long-time permanent residents holding (a) British, and (b) New Zealand citizenship took out Australian citizenship in each of the last 5 years and what change, if any, is predicted as a result of the campaign.

(4) For 2002-2003, how many resident return visas were issued by his department and what proportion of these were issued to permanent residents who hold citizenship of (a) New Zealand, and (b) the United Kingdom.

(5) How is it proposed to ensure that the measures outlined in part (2) do not have unintended adverse consequences on Australian residents who do not hold British or New Zealand citizenship and are not the target of the campaign.

Mr Hardgrave—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:
(1) Yes. My comments were aimed at highlighting the estimated 346,000 UK citizens and over 200,000 NZ citizens who meet the residence requirements to acquire Australian citizenship and have not yet chosen to. These two groups are by far the largest, with the next being Italian citizens of whom there are under 45,000. UK and NZ citizens are a particular focus of the Australian Citizenship Promotion campaign which has as its objectives:

- the encouragement of all eligible permanent residents to acquire Australian citizenship;
- the enhancement of the profile and significance of Australian citizenship among all Australians; and
- the promotion of Australian Citizenship Day, which was held for the first time on 17 September 2001, as a time for all Australians to celebrate Australian citizenship and reflect on what it means to us as individuals and as a community.

(2) (a) No. However, the Government is always looking at ways to encourage the acquisition of citizenship by eligible non-citizens, particularly those who have lived in Australia for many years and for whom citizenship would be a formalising of a long held commitment.

(b) As a matter of policy and regular practice the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade provides consular assistance to permanent residents travelling overseas as if they were Australian citizens, except that they are not generally entitled to any financial assistance. However, the ability of a consular officer to assist such persons may be limited to the extent that the host government is prepared to allow Australian involvement in the case.

The Australian Government would like to provide full protection and consular assistance to the many permanent residents who call Australia home and, therefore, encourages them all to formalise their ties to Australia by becoming a citizen.

(3) Data for acquisition of Australian citizenship by the UK and NZ born does not distinguish between long and short-term residence. The total number of the UK and NZ born who acquired Australian citizenship over the last 5 years are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Financial Year</th>
<th>No. of UK citizens conferred Australian citizenship</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1998 – 1999</td>
<td>13,529</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999 – 2000</td>
<td>14,592</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000 – 2001</td>
<td>12,474</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001 – 2002</td>
<td>16,411</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002 – 2003</td>
<td>13,926</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Financial Year</th>
<th>No. of NZ citizens conferred Australian citizenship</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1998 – 1999</td>
<td>6,320</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999 – 2000</td>
<td>6,676</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000 – 2001</td>
<td>11,007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001 – 2002</td>
<td>17,334</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002 – 2003</td>
<td>13,939</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The increase in 2001-02 can be attributed to the launch of a high profile promotion campaign aimed at encouraging eligible permanent residents to acquire Australian citizenship.

(4) The majority of New Zealand citizens enter Australia on Special Category visas and do not require Resident Return Visas (RRVs). New Zealand citizens arriving in Australia on or after 27 February...
2001 must apply for an Australian permanent resident visa if they wish to access certain Social Security payments. Only those New Zealand citizens who have been granted an Australian permanent resident visa may be eligible for an RRV.

During 2002-03, a total of 54,544 RRVs were granted. Of those, 47,723 were granted in Australia and 6,821 were granted overseas.

(a) A total of 15 RRVs were granted to New Zealand citizens.
(b) A total of 18,196 RRVs were granted to UK citizens.

(5) As indicated by the response at (2) above, no changes to existing arrangements are proposed.

**Trade: Free Trade Agreement**

*(Question No. 2611)*

Ms George asked the Minister for Trade, upon notice, on 14 October 2003:

(1) Have United States pharmaceutical companies and/or the United States Government sought to include the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) in negotiations concerning the proposed Australia and United States Free Trade Agreement; if so, what are the details of the representations made.

(2) Has the abolition and/or amendment of the PBS been a subject of discussion in talks concerning the proposed Australia and United States Free Trade Agreement; if so, what are the details of those discussions.

(3) Will the Government rule out changing or abolishing the PBS as part of the proposed Australia and United States Free Trade Agreement; if not, why not.

Mr Vaile—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) To date there have been several information exchanges in regard to the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme and its place as an essential component of our health care system and National Medicines Policy. While public comments from United States (US) officials have indicated that this is an area that may be raised in negotiations, to date no proposals have been made to Australia by the US on this issue.

(2) No.

(3) The Government has said from the beginning of negotiations that it will ensure that its ability to provide affordable medicines to Australians through a sustainable Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) will not be affected by the Free Trade Agreement (FTA).

**Foreign Affairs: Zimbabwe**

*(Question No. 2638)*

Mr Danby asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs, upon notice, on 15 October 2003:

(1) Is he aware of a report of arrests of the leadership of the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU); if so, can he confirm this report.

(2) Is he able to say (a) how many people were arrested, (b) what their names were, (c) which unions they worked for or were members of, (d) what positions they held, (e) when they were arrested, (f) what they were arrested for, and (g) what the circumstances of their arrest were.

(3) Are they still in custody; if not, when were they released.

(4) Have any of them been charged; if so, (a) who, (b) what were the charges, and (c) have any of them faced trial; if not, have dates been set for the trial; if so, (i) were they convicted, (ii) what was their sentence, and (iii) can he say whether the trials were free, fair and open.

(5) Can he confirm reports that a number of the unionists have been hospitalised with injuries sustained while in police custody.

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
(6) Were (a) the arrests of these people, or (b) the conditions under which they were held in breach of their human rights.

(7) Has the Government made any representations to the Zimbabwean government on this matter; if so, (a) to whom, (b) by whom, (c) when, and (d) what was the response; if not, why not.

**Mr Downer**—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

1. Yes; yes.
2. (a) The ZCTU reports that 41 activists were arrested in Harare and over a hundred in other towns.
   (b) No.
   (c) Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU).
   (d) The ZCTU reports that the ZCTU Secretary-General (Wellington Chibebe) and President (Lovemore Matombo) were among those arrested. Many others arrested held ZCTU positions.
   (e) 8 October.
   (f) The arrests were due to the individuals’ participation in and/or organisation of a protest march.
   (g) No.
3. Many of those arrested were released after paying “admission of guilt” fines. At least half of those arrested were released within two days. There is no information regarding the release of the remainder.
4. Yes.
   (a) Wellington Chibebe and Lovemore Matombo, among others, were charged under the Miscellaneous Offences law. The names of all those arrested have not been made public.
   (b) Many were charged under the Miscellaneous Offences law, while others were charged under the Public Order and Security Act. Zimbabwean authorities failed to provide further details.
   (c) There have been no reports that any of those arrested have gone to trial.
5. The ZCTU reports that three members detained by security forces in Bulawayo were beaten and required medical attention.
6. Depending on the specific circumstances of the arrest and detention of the ZCTU leadership, Zimbabwe may have breached its human rights obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.
7. The Government has expressed its strong opposition to the current policies in Zimbabwe to many officials in many different fora.

**Illawarra Electorate: Construction and Infrastructure Projects**

(Question No. 2665)

**Mr Organ** asked the Minister representing the Special Minister of State, upon notice, on 23 October 2003:

What measures are in place to ensure that consulting work connected with government construction and infrastructure projects in the Illawarra is assigned, as far as is reasonably practicable, to firms based in the region.

**Mr Abbott**—The Special Minister of State has provided the following answer to the honourable member’s question:

Finance follows the Commonwealth Procurement Guidelines and Best Practice Guidance when undertaking consulting work connected with government construction and infrastructure projects. In seeking best value for money, the Department of Finance and Administration (Finance) ensures regional businesses, in particular small and medium enterprises, are not disadvantaged in being able to compete for
work in their region. Finance currently has no major construction work underway or planned for the Illawarra region.

**Education and Training: Apprenticeships**

(Question No. 2732)

Mr Albanese asked the Minister for Education, Science and Training, upon notice, on 5 November 2003:

1. For each year since 1996, what was the total number of apprenticeship commencements in trades occupations.
2. For each year since 1996, what was the total number of successfully completed apprenticeships in trades occupations.
3. For each year since 1996, what was the total number of traineeship commencements in trades occupations.
4. For each year since 1996, what was the total number of successfully completed traineeships in trades occupations.

Dr Nelson—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

The National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) is the authoritative source of New Apprenticeships information. The NCVER has advised that they do not differentiate between apprenticeships and traineeships. The following information provides the Member with total numbers of New Apprenticeships in the categories sought.

(1) **New Apprenticeships Commencements by year - Trades and Related Workers (ASCO4)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year to</th>
<th>Number Commenced</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jun-96</td>
<td>39,906</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jun-97</td>
<td>39,655</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jun-98</td>
<td>43,665</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jun-99</td>
<td>53,475</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jun-00</td>
<td>55,053</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jun-01</td>
<td>48,968</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jun-02</td>
<td>52,814</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jun-03</td>
<td>50,895</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(2) **New Apprenticeships Completed by year - Trades and Related Workers (ASCO4)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year to</th>
<th>Number Completed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jun-96</td>
<td>22,545</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jun-97</td>
<td>25,477</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jun-98</td>
<td>27,678</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jun-99</td>
<td>26,773</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jun-00</td>
<td>26,642</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jun-01</td>
<td>25,564</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jun-02</td>
<td>27,934</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jun-03</td>
<td>34,260</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>