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FORTY-FIRST PARLIAMENT
FIRST SESSION—THIRD 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. David Peter Maxwell Hawker MP
Deputy Speaker—The Hon. Ian Raymond Causley MP
Second Deputy Speaker—Mr Harry Alfred Jenkins MP

Members of the Speaker’s Panel—The Hon. Dick Godfrey Harry Adams, Mr Robert Charles Baldwin, the Hon. Bronwyn Kathleen Bishop, Mr Michael John Hatton, Mr Peter John Lindsay, Mr Robert Francis McMullan, Mr Harry Vernon Quick, the Hon. Bruce Craig Scott, the Hon. Alexander Michael Somlyay, Mr Kimberley William Wilkie

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

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

The Nationals
Leader—The Hon. 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. Kim Christian Beazley MP
Deputy Leader—Ms Jennifer Louise Macklin MP
Chief Opposition Whip—The Hon. Leo Roger Spurway Price MP
Opposition Whips—Mr Michael Danby MP and Ms Jill Griffiths Hall MP

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Members of the House of Representatives

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<td>Washer, Malcolm James</td>
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<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilkie, Kimberley William</td>
<td>Swan, WA</td>
<td>ALP</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>Wood, Jason Peter</td>
<td>La Trobe, Vic</td>
<td>LP</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
Secretary, Department of Parliamentary Services—H R Penfold QC
HOWARD MINISTRY

Prime Minister                  The Hon. John Winston Howard MP
Minister for Transport and Regional Services and  The Hon. John Duncan Anderson MP
Deputy Prime Minister
Treasurer                      The Hon. Peter Howard Costello MP
Minister for Trade             The Hon. Mark Anthony James Vaile MP
Minister for Defence and Leader of the Government in the Senate  Senator the Hon. Robert Murray Hill
Minister for Foreign Affairs   The Hon. Alexander John Gosse Downer MP
Minister for Health and Ageing and Leader of the House  The Hon. Anthony John Abbott MP
Attorney-General                The Hon. Philip Maxwell Ruddock MP
Minister for Finance and Administration, Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate and  Senator the Hon. Nicholas Hugh Minchin
Vice-President of the Executive Council
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 Indigenous Affairs  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 Women’s Issues  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
Minister for Communications, Information Technology and the Arts  Senator the Hon. Helen Lloyd Coonan
Minister for the Environment and Heritage  Senator the Hon. Ian Gordon Campbell

(The above ministers constitute the cabinet)
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<td>Senator the Hon. Charles Roderick Kemp</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Human Services</td>
<td>The Hon. Joseph Benedict Hockey MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs and Deputy Leader of the House</td>
<td>The Hon. Peter John McGauran MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Revenue and Assistant Treasurer Special Minister of State</td>
<td>The Hon. Malcolm Thomas Brough MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Vocational and Technical Education and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Eric Abetz</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Ageing</td>
<td>The Hon. Gary Douglas Hardgrave MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Small Business and Tourism</td>
<td>The Hon. Julie Isabel Bishop MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Local Government, Territories and Roads</td>
<td>The Hon. Frances Esther Bailey MP</td>
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<td>Minister for Veterans’ Affairs and Minister Assisting the Minister for Defence</td>
<td>The Hon. James Eric Lloyd MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Workforce Participation</td>
<td>The Hon. De-Anne Margaret Kelly MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Finance and Administration</td>
<td>The Hon. Peter Craig Dutton MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Industry, Tourism and Resources</td>
<td>The Hon. Dr Sharman Nancy Stone MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Health and Ageing</td>
<td>The Hon. Warren George Entsch MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Defence</td>
<td>The Hon. Christopher Maurice Pyne MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade</td>
<td>The Hon. Teresa Gambaro MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister</td>
<td>The Hon. Bruce Fredrick Billson MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasurer</td>
<td>The Hon. Gary Roy Nairn MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Transport and Regional Services</td>
<td>The Hon. Christopher John Pearce MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for the Environment and Heritage</td>
<td>The Hon. John Kenneth Cobb MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary (Children and Youth Affairs)</td>
<td>The Hon. Gregory Andrew Hunt MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary (Children and Youth Affairs)</td>
<td>The Hon. Sussan Penelope Ley MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Education, Science and Training</td>
<td>The Hon. Patrick Francis Farmer MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Richard Mansell Colbeck</td>
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<td>The Hon. Kim Christian Beazley MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deputy Leader of the Opposition and Shadow Minister for Education, Training, Science and Research</td>
<td>Jennifer Louise Macklin MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Senate and Shadow Minister for Social Security</td>
<td>Senator Christopher Vaughan Evans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Senate and Shadow Minister for Communications and Information Technology</td>
<td>Senator Stephen Michael Conroy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Health and Manager of Opposition Business in the House</td>
<td>Julia Eileen Gillard MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Treasurer</td>
<td>Wayne Maxwell Swan MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Industry, Infrastructure and Industrial Relations</td>
<td>Stephen Francis Smith MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Security</td>
<td>Kevin Michael Rudd MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Defence and Homeland Security</td>
<td>Robert Bruce McClelland MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Trade</td>
<td>The Hon. Simon Findlay Crean MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Primary Industries, Resources and Tourism</td>
<td>Martin John Ferguson MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Environment and Heritage and Deputy Manager of Opposition Business in the House</td>
<td>Anthony Norman Albanese MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Public Administration and Open Government, Shadow Minister for Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation and Shadow Minister for the Arts</td>
<td>Senator Kim John Carr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Regional Development and Roads and Shadow Minister for Housing and Urban Development</td>
<td>Kelvin John Thomson MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Finance and Superannuation</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Nicholas John Sherry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Work, Family and Community, Shadow Minister for Youth and Early Childhood Education and Shadow Minister Assisting the Leader on the Status of Women</td>
<td>Tanya Joan Plibersek MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Employment and Workplace Participation and Shadow Minister for Corporate Governance and Responsibility</td>
<td>Senator Penelope Ying Yen Wong</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Name</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Immigration</td>
<td>Laurence Donald Thomas Ferguson MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries</td>
<td>Gavan Michael O’Connor MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Assistant Treasurer, Shadow Minister for Revenue and Shadow</td>
<td>Joel Andrew Fitzgibbon MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Banking and Financial Services</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Attorney-General</td>
<td>Nicola Louise Roxon MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Regional Services, Local Government and Territories</td>
<td>Senator Kerry Williams Kelso O’Brien</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Manufacturing and Shadow Minister for Consumer</td>
<td>Senator Kate Alexandra Lundy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Affairs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Defence Planning, Procurement and Shadow</td>
<td>The Hon. Archibald Ronald Bevis MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Industry-Assisting the Shadow Minister for Industrial</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Sport and Recreation</td>
<td>Alan Peter Griffin MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Veterans’ Affairs</td>
<td>Senator Thomas Mark Bishop</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Small Business</td>
<td>Tony Burke MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Ageing, Disabilities and Carers</td>
<td>Senator Jan Elizabeth McLucas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Justice and Customs, Shadow Minister for</td>
<td>Senator Joseph William Ludwig</td>
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<tr>
<td>Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs and Manager of Opposition</td>
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<td>Business in the Senate</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Pacific Islands</td>
<td>Robert Charles Grant Sercombe MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Opposition</td>
<td>John Paul Murphy MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Defence</td>
<td>The Hon. Graham John Edwards MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Education</td>
<td>Kirsten Fiona Livermore MP</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Jennie George MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Infrastructure</td>
<td>Bernard Fernando Ripoll MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Health</td>
<td>Ann Kathleen Corcoran MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Regional Development (House)</td>
<td>Catherine Fiona King MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Regional Development (Senate)</td>
<td>Senator Ursula Mary Stephens</td>
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<tr>
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Thursday, 26 May 2005

The SPEAKER (Hon. David Hawker) took the chair at 9 am and read prayers.

PRIME MINISTER

Motion

Mr BEAZLEY (Brand—Leader of the Opposition) (9.01 am)—I move:

That so much of the standing and sessional orders be suspended as would prevent the Leader of the Opposition moving the following motion:

That the Prime Minister come into the House to explain the action he will take to fix the national scandal caused by his Government’s mismanagement of Australia’s immigration system, in particular to:

(1) remove the Minister for Immigration and appoint a new Minister;
(2) establish a Royal Commission into the now hundreds of cases of possible illegal detention by the Department of Immigration;
(3) ensure the proper investigation of the Solon case in which an Australian citizen has been deported from her own country;
(4) guarantee that all the proceedings, findings and recommendations of the Palmer inquiry are made public; and
(5) give back to the Australian people what they deserve, an immigration system which protects our borders and respects our values.

Border protection requires competence. How much longer can this scandal go—

Mr McGAURAN (Gippsland—Deputy Leader of the House) (9.02 am)—I move:

That the member be no longer heard.

Question put.

The House divided. [9.06 am]

(Ayes—Hon. David Hawker)

Ayes.......... 79
Noes.......... 57
Majority....... 22

AYES

Abbott, AJ  Andrews, KJ
Bailey, FE  Baird, BG
Baker, M  Baldwin, RC
Barresi, PA  Bartlett, KJ
Bishop, BK  Bishop, JJ
Broadbent, R  Brough, MT
Cadman, AG  Causley, IR
Ciobo, SM  Cobb, JK
Costello, PH  Downer, AJG
Dutton, PC  Elson, KS
Entsch, WG  Farmer, PF
Fawcett, D  Ferguson, MD
Forrest, JA *  Gambero, T
Gash, J  Georgiou, P
Haase, BW  Hardgrave, GD
Hartsuyker, L  Henry, S
Hockey, JB  Howard, JW
Hull, KE  Hunt, GA
Jensen, D  Johnson, MA
Keenan, M  Kelly, DM
Kelly, JM  Laming, A
Ley, SP  Lindsay, PJ
Lloyd, JE  Macfarlane, IE
Markus, L  May, MA
McArthur, S *  McGaouran, PJ
Moylan, J.E  Neville, PC
Panopoulos, S  Pearce, CJ
Prosser, GD  Pyne, C
Randall, DJ  Richardson, K
Robb, A  Ruddock, PM
Schultz, A  Scott, BC
Secker, PD  Slipper, PN
Smith, ADH  Somervyl, AM
Stone, SN  Thompson, CP
Ticehurst, KV  Tollner, DW
Truss, WE  Tuckey, CW
Turnbull, M  Vaile, MAJ
Vale, DS  Vasta, R
Wakelin, BH  Washer, MJ
Wood, J

NOES

Albanese, AN  Beazley, KC
Bevis, AR  Bird, S
Bowen, C  Burke, AE
Burke, AS  Byrne, AM
Corcoran, AK  Crean, SF
Danby, M *  Edwards, GJ
Elliot, J  Ellis, AL
Ellis, K  Emerson, CA
Ferguson, LDT  Ferguson, MJ
Question agreed to.

Mr LAURIE FERGUSON (Reid) (9.10 am)—The revelation that the minister’s officers decided to cover up an investigation—

Mr McGAURAN (Gippsland—Deputy Leader of the House) (9.10 am)—I move:

That the member be no longer heard.

Question put.

The House divided. [9.11 am]

(The Speaker—Hon. David Hawker)

Ayes............ 79

Noes............ 58

Majority........ 21

AYES

Abbott, AJ Andrews, KJ
Bailey, FE Baird, BG
Baker, M Baldwin, RC
Barresi, PA Bartlett, KJ
Bishop, BK Bishop, JJ
Broadbent, R Brough, MT
Cadman, AG Cauley, IR
Ciobo, SM Cobb, JK
Costello, PH Dohner, AAG
Dutton, PC Elson, KS
Entsch, WG Farmer, PF

Fawcett, D Forrest, JA *
Gash, J Haase, BW
Hartson, L Hockey, JB
Hull, KE
Jensen, D Kelly, JE
Keenan, M Kelly, JM
Ley, SP Lloyd, JE
Markus, L
McArthur, S *
Moylan, JE
Panopoulos, S
Prosser, GD
Randall, DJ
Robb, A
Schultz, A
Secker, PD
Smith, ADH
Stone, SN
Ticehurst, KV
Truss, WE
Turnbull, M
Vale, DS
Wakelin, BH
Wood, J

NOES

Adams, DGH Albanese, AN
Beazley, KC Bevis, AR
Bird, S Bowen, C
Burke, AE Burke, AS
Byrne, AM Corcoran, AK
Crean, SF Danby, M *
Edwards, GJ Elliot, J
Ellis, AL Ellis, K
Emerson, CA Emerson, CA
Ferguson, MJ
Garrett, P Georganas, S
George, J Gibbons, SW
Gillard, JE Grieves, SJ
Griffin, AP Hall, JJ *
Hatton, MJ Hayes, CP
Irwin, J Jenkins, HA
Kerr, DJC King, CF
Lawrence, CM Livermore, KF
Macklin, JL McClelland, RB
McMullan, RF Melham, D
Murphy, JP O’Connor, BP

* denotes teller
Thursday, 26 May 2005

Question agreed to.

Original question put:

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

The House divided. [9.14 am]

(The Speaker—Hon. David Hawker)

Ayes………….  58

Noes………….  79

Majority…….  21

AYES

Adams, DGH  Albanese, AN
Beazley, KC  Bevis, AR
Bird, S  Bowen, C
Burke, AE  Burke, AS
Byrne, AM  Corcoran, AK
Crean, SF  Danby, M *
Edwards, GJ  Elliot, J
Ellis, AL  Ellis, K
Emerson, CA  Ferguson, LDT
Ferguson, MJ  Fitzgibbon, JA
Garrett, P  Georganas, S
George, J  Gibbons, SW
Gillard, JE  Grierson, SJ
Griffin, AP  Hall, JG *
Hatton, MJ  Hayes, CP
Irwin, J  Jenkins, HA
Kerr, DJC  King, CF
Lawrence, CM  Livermore, KF
Macklin, JL  McClelland, RB
McMullan, RF  Melham, D
Murphy, J.P  O’Connor, BP
O’Connor, GM  Owens, J
Plibersek, T  Price, LRS
Quick, HV  Ripoll, BF
Rudd, KM  Sawford, RW
Sercombe, RCG  Smith, SF
Swan, WM  Tanner, L
Thomson, KJ  Vamvakroun, M
Wilkie, K  Windsor, AHC

NOES

Abbott, AJ  Andrews, KJ
Bailey, FE  Baird, BG
Baker, M  Baldwin, RC
Barresi, PA  Bartlett, KJ
Bishop, BK  Bishop, JJ
Broadbent, R  Brough, MT
Cadman, AG  Causley, IR
Cio, SM  Cobb, JK
Costello, PH  Downer, AJG
Dutton, PC  Elson, KS
Entsch, WG  Farmer, PF
Fawcett, D  Ferguson, MD
Forrest, JA *  Gambaro, T
Gash, J  Georgiou, P
Haase, BW  Hardgrave, GD
Hartsuyker, L  Henry, S
Hockey, JB  Howard, JW
Hull, KE  Hunt, GA
Jensen, D  Johnson, MA
Keenan, M  Kelly, DM
Kelty, JM  Laming, A
Ley, SP  Lindsay, PJ
Lloyd, JE  Macfarlane, IE
Markus, L  May, MA
McArthur, S *  McGauran, PJ
Moylan, J.E  Neville, PC
Panopoulos, S  Pearce, CJ
Prosper, GD  Pyne, C
Randall, DJ  Richardson, K
Robb, A  Ruddock, PM
Schultz, A  Scott, BC
Secker, PD  Slipper, PN
Smith, ADH  Somlyay, AM
Stone, SN  Thompson, CP
Ticehurst, KV  Toller, DW
Truss, WE  Tuckey, CW
Turnbull, M  Vaile, MAJ
Vale, DS  Vasta, R
Wakelin, BH  Washer, MJ
Wood, J  * denotes teller

Question negatived.

SUPERANNUATION LAWS
AMENDMENT (ABOLITION OF
SURCHARGE) BILL 2005

First Reading

Bill presented by Mr Costello, and read a first time.
Second Reading

Mr COSTELLO (Higgins—Treasurer) (9.17 am)—I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Over the past few years the government has made a number of significant announcements and implemented a number of important measures aimed at improving the superannuation and retirement income arrangements for all Australians. These changes have demonstrated the government’s commitment to assisting Australians to build financial self-reliance for their retirement. Initiatives announced in the 2001 policy statement A Better Superannuation System have enhanced the overall attractiveness, accessibility and security of superannuation. This included the introduction of the co-contribution scheme for eligible low-income earners who make voluntary superannuation contributions, and reductions in superannuation surcharge rates. The policy paper A More Flexible and Adaptable Retirement Income System, released on 25 February 2004, outlined further measures to improve the accessibility, flexibility and integrity of the retirement income system and to reduce red tape. This included the removal of work tests for individuals under the age of 65 who wanted to contribute to superannuation.

A significant boost to superannuation savings was also provided in the 2004-05 budget, which contained incentives to save for retirement worth $2.8 billion over four years, including an expansion of the co-contribution scheme and further reductions in the superannuation surcharge rates. More recently, the government has secured the passage of legislation to deliver choice of fund and reconfirmed its commitment to the superannuation contribution splitting policy. Unfortunately, both of these measures had been held up in the Senate during the last term of the last parliament. In the 2002-03 budget, the government announced that the superannuation surcharge would be reduced at the rate of 1½ per cent per annum from 2002-03 so that it would have reduced to 10.5 per cent in 2004-05. Unfortunately, that reduction was opposed in the Senate and the government was only able to secure through the Senate a reduction to 13½ per cent in 2004-05. In the 2004-05 budget, however, the government announced a policy to reduce the superannuation surcharge, at a rate of 2½ per cent per annum, to 12½ per cent in 2004-05 and reducing to 7½ per cent in 2006-07. Again, unfortunately, opposition from the Labor Party in the Senate prevented the reduction as announced in that budget. The government undertook at the last election to reduce further the maximum surcharge rates.

In pursuance of the policy that we took to the last election, the government has now reviewed the superannuation surcharge. The government now proposes to remove this impost on superannuation savings and abolish the surcharge payable on individual surchargeable contributions and relevant termination payments with effect from 1 July 2005. Approximately 600,000 Australians will receive a boost to their superannuation savings as a result of this measure. It is estimated to cost $2.5 billion over the forward estimates. The superannuation surcharge was introduced in 1996 at a time when the budget was deeply in deficit as a result of Labor’s economic mismanagement. It was introduced in 1996 in part to drive the budget back into balance. The government laid down a policy in 1996 in part to drive the budget back into balance. The government laid down a policy in 1996 to drive the budget back into balance from a $10.3 billion deficit which the Labor Party had left in place.

After bringing down 10 budgets and eight surpluses this measure is no longer required to keep the budget in balance. Accordingly, the government is moving in this parliament to abolish it from 1 July 2005. As I said,
600,000 Australians will receive a boost to their superannuation savings as a result of this measure. The measure presented in this bill will also provide incentives for individuals to make additional voluntary savings through the superannuation system and simplify the operation of the superannuation system.

This will be a major improvement in terms of reducing complexity. The government, when it looked at reducing the rates, as it had tried to do in the 2002-03 budget, was minded of the fact that as the rates reduced, and therefore the revenue raised by it reduced, the administration costs as a proportion increased, because there is quite some considerable complexity in the administration of a superannuation surcharge. That is, administration and compliance costs which may have been justified by a rate of 15 per cent could no longer be sustained at lower rates and as a consequence it makes sense to abolish the superannuation surcharge in its entirety.

The bill that I have commended to the House will do that. We look forward to support from all sides of politics in the abolition of the superannuation surcharge. I commend the Superannuation Laws Amendment (Abolition of Surcharge) Bill 2005 to the House and I present the explanatory memorandum.

Debate (on motion by Mr Fitzgibbon) adjourned.

CRIMES AMENDMENT BILL 2005
First Reading
Bill presented by Mr Ruddock, and read a first time.

Second Reading
Mr RUDDOCK (Berowra—Attorney-General) (9:24 am)—I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

This bill amends the Crimes Act 1914 to enable Commonwealth participating agencies to request assumed identity documents from state and territory issuing agencies in accordance with legislation in force in those jurisdictions.

Assumed identities are false identities adopted to facilitate intelligence and investigative functions, or the infiltration of a criminal, hostile or insecure environment with a view to collecting information and investigating offences.

Under the current provisions of the Crimes Act, officers from specified Commonwealth and state agencies, such as the Australian Federal Police, the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation and the police forces of each state, may acquire evidence of an assumed identity from a Commonwealth agency.

This covers documentation such as passports and Medicare cards.

However, the acquisition of evidence of identity from the states and territories such as birth certificates and drivers licences has generally proceeded in the absence of a legislative framework.

Most states and territories are now in the process of considering the enactment of legislation to regulate the acquisition and use of evidence of assumed identities.

Victoria has enacted their legislation and may look to commence the provisions in July.

It is therefore necessary to make consequential amendments to the Commonwealth legislation to ensure that our Commonwealth agencies are able to access evidence from state authorities in accordance with the legislation in each state or territory.

The amendments do not alter the provisions that control the use of assumed identities; existing requirements for authorisation, offences, and reporting and accountability measures remain fully in place.
The amendments do, however, reflect the recognition that crime knows no boundaries and that law enforcement and national security agencies are continually having to work in a cooperative matter to detect and eliminate criminal activity.

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

Debate (on motion by Mr Gavan O’Connor) adjourned.

LAW AND JUSTICE LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (SERIOUS DRUG OFFENCES AND OTHER MEASURES) BILL 2005

First Reading
Bill presented by Mr Ruddock, and read a first time.

Second Reading
Mr RUDDOCK (Berowra—Attorney-General) (9.27 am)—I move:
That this bill be now read a second time.

This bill demonstrates the government’s commitment to reduce the supply of illicit drugs by strengthening anti-drug laws.

In April 2002, leaders from all Australian jurisdictions made a commitment to implement model drug offences that were developed after nationwide consultation.

The Australian government is honouring that commitment. I encourage those states and territories that have not yet done so to do the same.

Our existing offences are mainly focused on preventing illicit drugs from crossing Australia’s border. The new offences will also apply to drug dealings within Australia.

To that extent, they will operate alongside state and territory offences to give more flexibility to law enforcement agencies. This approach will ensure there are no gaps between federal and state laws that can be exploited by drug cartels.

The bill will introduce new federal offences that focus specifically on the trade in precursor chemicals: the substances that can be used to manufacture pills and ‘designer drugs’.

In addition, the maximum penalty for manufacturing commercial quantities of pills and ‘designer drugs’ will be appropriately increased from 10 years imprisonment to life imprisonment.

The bill also provides important protection to children. People who use children to traffic in drugs will be subject to heavier penalties.

The bill also creates new offences that target those who harm children or endanger children by recklessly exposing them to the manufacture of illicit drugs.

The manufacture of illicit drugs in clandestine laboratories is of great concern to the Australian government because it involves volatile and toxic chemicals that are susceptible to fire and explosion, and pose significant health risks.

It is clear that these ‘backyard’ drug manufacture operations pose significant risks of harm to innocent bystanders, particularly children.

This bill sends a clear message that exposing children to the dangers of illicit drug manufacture will not be tolerated.

The reforms in this bill will better equip law enforcement agencies to target those who attempt to avoid liability for the most serious offences by fragmenting their commercial dealings in drugs.

Where a person has trafficked in relatively small quantities of drugs on a number of occasions within a seven-day period, the new laws will allow prosecutors to add those quantities together so the person can be prosecuted for a single offence involving the total quantity.
The bill will also make our drug laws more responsive to changes in the illicit drugs market by enabling dangerous new drugs and precursor chemicals to be quickly added to the list of illicit substances. In urgent cases, new substances will be able to be added to the list through a ministerial determination—a legislative instrument capable of being made within a matter of days.

One of the main objectives of this bill is to increase the uniformity of drug laws throughout Australia by implementing model drug offences. The next important step will be to achieve nationally consistent lists of drugs that the model offences can apply, and the quantities that trigger the different penalty tiers under the model offences.

The Ministerial Council on Drug Strategy has established a national working party to develop model lists of drugs and quantities to be adopted by all Australian jurisdictions. The lists of drugs and quantities in this bill will be reviewed when the recommendations of the working party become available.

Until that time, the lists of drugs and quantities that apply to the new federal offences focusing on drug dealings within Australia will be limited to a small number of common drugs.

Although the major focus of the bill is on drug offences, it also includes a number of other important legislative amendments.

Schedule 2 of the bill gives effect to an international obligation under the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict.

It does this by criminalising the recruitment of children by non-government armed groups, and their use of children in hostilities.

Schedule 4 of the bill clarifies the scope of the functions of the Australian Federal Police in the current environment of increasingly globalised criminal activity and law enforcement responses.

These amendments confirm that the Australian Federal Police’s functions include assisting and cooperating with domestic and foreign law enforcement organisations and government regulatory and intelligence bodies, including in criminal investigations and major disaster situations.

The Australian Federal Police’s functions also include participation in international peace and stability operations and capacity-building missions.

Through this bill the government is playing an important leadership role by implementing model drug offences that must also be implemented by states and territories.

The enactment of the bill will encourage the remaining jurisdictions to complete their legislation and meet the challenge set by Mr Justice Williams in 1980 to achieve national consistency in this very significant area of the criminal law.

Drug abuse directly touches the lives of thousands of Australians and indirectly affects us all. It is essential that drug traffickers are met with a consistent and more sophisticated array of laws. I commend the bill to the House and present the explanatory memorandum.

Debate (on motion by Mr Gavan O’Connor) adjourned.

IMPORT PROCESSING CHARGES AMENDMENT BILL 2005

First Reading

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

Second Reading

Mr RUDDOCK (Berowra—Attorney-General) (9.32 am)—I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.
This bill is the first of two in the legislative package for the restructure of the cost recovery regime for import related services which was originally proposed to support the new management and processing of cargo by Customs. Cost recovery for import related services has been in place since 1997.

This bill provides the legislative authority to restructure the import declaration and the warehouse declaration processing charges contained in the Import Processing Charges Act 2001—that is, the IPC Act 2001. The structure under the existing IPC Act 2001 is based on the value of imported goods and applies the same charge irrespective of the method of importation. It is proposed to change this structure and instead base the charges on the method of importation, either by sea, air or post without reference to the value of the imported goods. This new structure will be the same as the original charging structure currently operating under the Import Processing Charges Act 1997. In addition, the second bill in this package will repeal two cargo reporting charges relating to low-value consignments, which will be incorporated into the restructured import declaration and warehouse declaration processing charges.

Consultation with industry in relation to the restructuring proposal has occurred. Industry representatives support the requirement to restructure the charges as proposed and also support the amalgamation of the charges for low-value consignments into the import declaration and warehouse declaration processing charges.

As previously stated this bill will ensure that the charges are equitable in their application to the users of import processing services. I commend the bill to the House and present the explanatory memorandum.

Debate (on motion by Mr Gavan O'Connor) adjourned.

CUSTOMS LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (IMPORT PROCESSING CHARGES) BILL 2005

First Reading

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

Second Reading

Mr RUDDOCK (Berowra—Attorney-General) (9.35 am)—I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

This bill is the second of two in the legislative package for the restructure of the cost recovery regime for import related services.

This bill provides the legislative authority to repeal the self-assessed clearance declaration charge and the screening charge. These charges apply to the processing of low-value consignments that do not require an import declaration or a warehouse declaration. The costs associated with the processing of these low-value consignments will be incorporated into the charges being amended by the first bill of this package. These amendments are consistent with Commonwealth cost recovery guidelines whereby charges that detract from administrative simplicity are eliminated, thus enhancing the cost effectiveness of the total Customs cost recovery regime.

Since introduction of the current cost recovery regime in 1997, Customs has consulted with industry on a regular basis under the auspices of the Customs National Consultative Committee. The committee comprises representatives from the various sectors of the importing community. Due to industry concerns raised in the committee and in other forums in relation to the charges imposed on low-value consignments, the government has decided to streamline the total charging package.

It is projected that the self-assessed clearance declaration charge and the screening charge would apply to two million low-value
consignments in financial year 2005-06. These consignments would predominantly be imported by air. Both of these charges will be repealed, resulting in cost reductions in the administrative burden placed on the importing community and significant savings for importers of low-value consignments.

Industry agrees with elimination of these two charges and their incorporation into the import declaration and warehouse declaration processing charges.

As already stated, this package will streamline the Customs cost recovery regime and significantly reduce administrative complexity. I commend the bill to the House and present the explanatory memorandum.

Debate (on motion by Mr Gavan O’Connor) adjourned.

FILM LICENSED INVESTMENT COMPANY BILL 2005

First Reading

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

Second Reading

Mr McGauran (Gippsland—Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs) (9.37 am)—I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The government recognises the importance of a viable local film and television industry. The sector’s input to both our economy and our cultural life is significant. As a whole, the Australian film and television industry contributes some $2.1 billion annually to GDP and employs more than 25,500 people. The government wants the sector to produce increasing numbers of films that appeal to local and international audiences.

These are some of the reasons that the government provides a range of support to this sector, thus ensuring its long-term sustainability. There is no question that, without government intervention, there would be few local voices on our screens. Equally, the government is keen to attract additional private sector investment in the film industry. The extension of the Film Licensed Investment Company scheme is one aspect of a package of measures designed to generate greater levels of private finance.

Despite that support, the government acknowledges that it has become increasingly difficult for our film and television to compete both locally and abroad. While key creative Australians like directors and actors continue to attract international accolades, production levels and the box office performance of local films have fallen.

The government does not resile from its responsibilities in assisting to arrest this downturn. Australia’s practitioners have expressed a determination to work through current challenges, and the government is also prepared to play its role. The extension of the Film Licensed Investment Company scheme—which I will refer to as FLIC, as it is so well known—demonstrates our commitment in this regard.

The extended FLIC scheme is part of a broader package of measures announced during last year’s election and was recently confirmed in the 2005-06 budget. This package is worth $88 million over four years. As a result, total direct funding for film in the forthcoming financial year is at a high of almost $160 million.

The package is a carefully balanced, strategic intervention and takes a whole-of-industry approach. It is comprehensive and acknowledges that there is no single quick fix that can address current challenges. It will strengthen our film and television sector through a combination of increases in direct support to our film agencies and by making the film sector more attractive to private investors.
In the future, the Australian film industry—indeed, film and television sectors of a similar size around the world—must attract greater levels of private sector support. Private investment is an important complement to direct funding by government. In Australia, film and television financing is usually a complex combination of investment from the marketplace, government funding and private investors. Reduction in funding from one of these sources can make or break individual projects and, in the longer term, impact on the industry’s viability.

Support from individuals and corporate entities needs to grow as part of that fragile funding pool. The extended FLIC scheme seeks to encourage that growth and bring the private sector investor back to film and television.

The pilot FLIC scheme commenced in 1999 and triggered $63 million worth of feature film production alone. It produced relatively successful but well-known and worthwhile films such as *Crackerjack*, *Dirty Deeds* and *The Bank*.

The extended FLIC scheme is a key element in the government’s film package, which aims to restore investor confidence in the local film and television sector.

The focus of the scheme is on encouraging investment in the production of Australian films. Production is the most costly aspect of filmmaking. Without adequate funding and appropriate investment levels to improve the quality aspects of production, the chances of success for a film or television program are significantly diminished.

To inject funds at the production or front-end of the filmmaking process, the extended scheme will allow investors a 100 per cent up-front deduction on the purchase of FLIC shares in the year of investment. These funds will immediately flow to the FLIC, subject to certain licence conditions being met. The FLIC must be an Australian owned and controlled company raising funds primarily from Australian investors in qualifying Australian films.

The extended scheme will allow a single FLIC licensee to raise up to $20 million over a two-year period at a total cost to revenue of $8 million in 2006-07 and 2007-08. Issuing of a single licence will minimise the duplication of administrative costs that may result from the issuing of multiple licences.

Funds raised by the FLIC will be invested in a range of film and television productions, thus spreading investor risk—and opportunities for commercial returns—across a production slate. Investment in marketing and distribution activities will be permitted under the extended scheme, up to a maximum of half of the amount which the FLIC invests in production. This will again ensure that the majority of FLIC investment is directed towards production while allowing the company an appropriate opportunity to increase investor return through additional investment in marketing and distribution.

Co-investment from other market players will also be permitted under the extended scheme in order to maximise the value of productions. The intention is that FLIC monies will act as a trigger for larger commercial organisations, including broadcasters, distributors and other production houses, to invest in Australian productions. This will result in films with bigger budgets and quality, high-end production values. This in turn leads to greater opportunities for commercial success and improved returns to FLIC investors.

The extension of the FLIC scheme has been welcomed by the sector as a timely intervention in a difficult market where investor confidence in Australian films is low.

It will seek to revitalise private support and, combined with other recently an-
nounced taxation measures, restore investor confidence in our industry. I commend the bill to the House and present the explanatory memorandum.

Debate (on motion by Mr Gavan O’Connor) adjourned.

FILM LICENSED INVESTMENT COMPANY (CONSEQUENTIAL PROVISIONS) BILL 2005

First Reading

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

Second Reading

Mr McGauran (Gippsland—Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs) (9.45 am)—I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Film Licensed Investment Company (Consequential Provisions) Bill 2005 is a companion to the Film Licensed Investment Company Bill 2005.

The bill authorises an up-front taxation deduction for shares in the Film Licensed Investment Company (FLIC) purchased during the 2005-06 and 2006-07 income years by subscribing investors. The investor is not entitled to the deduction until the shares have been fully paid and issued to the shareholder. This arrangement mirrors the deduction available under the pilot scheme.

The up-front nature of the concession is consistent with taxation incentives for investment in individual qualifying Australian films under the Income Tax Assessment Act 1936. The FLIC scheme combines the attractiveness of an up-front concession with the added incentive of spreading investor risk across a range of film and television productions.

Full details of the measures in the bill are contained in the explanatory memorandum, which I will now table. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate (on motion by Mr Gavan O’Connor) adjourned.

MELBOURNE 2006 COMMONWEALTH GAMES (INDICIA AND IMAGES) PROTECTION BILL 2005

First Reading

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

Second Reading

Mr McGauran (Gippsland—Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs) (9.47 am)—I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The purpose of the bill is to protect the Melbourne 2006 Commonwealth (M2006) Games sponsorship and licensing revenue from being undermined by unauthorised use of the Games indicia—which is another word for symbols—and images by corporate competitors of the official Games sponsors.

The government adopted a similar approach when it legislated to protect the Sydney Games indicia and images through the Sydney 2000 Games (Indicia and Images) Protection Act 1996, as amended (the Sydney Games act).

The hosting of the 2006 Commonwealth Games provides a unique opportunity to showcase to the world this country’s skills, talents, environment and achievements. Preparations for the Games have proceeded under the guidance of the Melbourne 2006 Commonwealth Games Corporation (M2006 Corporation), and the Victorian Office of Commonwealth Games Coordination (OCGC) together with a high level of cooperation between the Victorian and Australian governments.

In 2001, the Victorian government enacted the Commonwealth Games Arrangements
Act 2001 (the Victorian act) to facilitate preparations for the Games, including providing protection for M2006 Games indicia and images. The Victorian act only applies within the state of Victoria and allows Victorian Police to seize goods and advertising material marked with M2006 Games indicia and images from within a Commonwealth Games venue or a designated access area but only during the period 1 January to 31 March 2006.

The M2006 bill is consistent with the approach the Australian government took in protecting Sydney 2000 Games indicia through the Sydney Games act. The bill has been designed to complement the indicia protection provisions of the Victorian act. While the Victorian act gives powers to Victorian Police to seize goods, the bill before the House allows the Australian Customs Service to perform functions similar to those it undertook at the time of the Sydney 2000 Games, by seizing goods marked with unauthorised indicia and images at Australia’s borders.

The task of organising the M2006 Games is large, complex, and expensive. The Victorian government has allocated considerable sums of money in the lead-up to the Games for the refurbishment of facilities and construction of infrastructure, organisation and marketing.

The Australian government is contributing $102.9 million in direct financial assistance and a further $177.9 million through the provision of support services. The Victorian government has indicated the Games budget is $1.1 billion dollars and has committed almost $700 million to finance the M2006 Games.

Beyond the government contributions, the primary sources of revenue for the M2006 Games will be television rights, ticket sales, sponsorship and the licensing of the right to use the Games indicia and images. Licensing and sponsorships are expected to contribute around $130 million to the Games revenue budget.

The government recognises that the preservation of sponsorship revenue is essential to achieving a good budget outcome for the M2006 Games. The ability of the M2006 Corporation to attract sponsors will depend to a large extent on the degree of exclusivity afforded to the licensed indicia and images. Official sponsors recognise the commercial value of associating themselves with events of the magnitude of the Commonwealth Games and are willing to pay considerable sums of money to use the words and symbols associated with the Commonwealth Games.

‘Ambush marketing’, however, has the capacity to seriously erode the official sponsorship revenue if not stopped or minimised. Ambush marketing is the unauthorised association of businesses with the marketing of an event without paying for marketing rights. Typically it is the competitors of official sponsors of major sporting events that engage in these activities. That is stating the obvious. Who else would rise to the opportunity of ambush marketing? Ambush marketing can not only dissuade official sponsors from continuing their association with the Games but it has the potential to substantially reduce the amount sponsors are prepared to pay for the rights.

Therefore, the preservation of sponsorship revenue is not only critical to the protection of official sponsorship but indeed fundamental to achieving a sound financial outcome for the Games and ensuring the least call on the public purse.

The bill will protect the use of a range of words and expressions associated with the M2006 Games such as ‘Melbourne 2006 Commonwealth Games’, ‘M2006 Games’ and ‘Friendly Games’ from ambush market-
In addition to protecting particular words, numbers and expressions, the bill also provides protection to certain images that in the circumstances of their presentation suggest, or are likely to suggest, a connection with the M2006 Games. These images may be either visual or aural representations. The manner in which M2006 indicia and images will be defined and protected by the M2006 bill is consistent with the approach used to prescribe words, expressions and images under the Sydney Games Act.

The rights in the above protected indicia and images rest with the M2006 Corporation. It has the power to use and to authorise others to use M2006 indicia and images for commercial purposes.

To constitute use for commercial purposes, the M2006 Games indicia or images must be applied to a person's goods or services for advertising or promotional purposes, or for enhancing the demand for the goods or services, and in a manner which would suggest that the person is or has been a sponsor of, or is or has been providing other support for, the M2006 Games.

In order to enable the public to be aware of the identity of those authorised to use M2006 indicia and images, a register has been established under the Victorian act upon which the M2006 Corporation is responsible for keeping account of authorised users and entering the details onto the register. An entry in the register will include the name of any person authorised by the M2006 Corporation; the date of authorisation; the duration of authorisation; whether the authorisation applies generally or in specified circumstances; and whether the authorisation authorises the use of all M2006 indicia and images or specified kinds of such indicia and images. A person whose name appears on the register constitutes an authorised user of M2006 indicia and images.

While it is important to protect M2006 Games sponsors from ambush marketing, the rights of the community to freedom of expression must also be respected, particularly in relation to words that have passed into common usage. It must therefore be emphasised that restrictions on the usage of the M2006 indicia and images will apply only to unlicensed commercial use of the protected indicia and images. This is consistent with the approach adopted to protect Sydney 2000 Games indicia and images.

Moreover, it is made clear in the bill that the legislation is not intended to affect the working of many aspects of everyday business. It is recognised that some individuals and corporations, such as the Australian Commonwealth Games Association (ACGA) and the Commonwealth Games Federation (CGF), already use the indicia prescribed in the legislation in conjunction with their goods and services. The bill fully protects the rights of the ACGA and the CGF to use M2006 indicia to carry out its business functions.

Just as the Sydney 2000 Games Act permitted the use of Sydney 2000 Games indicia or images solely for the purposes of providing information, or for the purposes of criticism or review, so does this bill in relation to M2006 indicia and images. As you would appreciate, Mr Deputy Speaker, the lawyers have to allow for every possible contingency and the cunningness and resolve of ambush marketers to exploit any possible loophole whatsoever to ride off the back of the authorised sponsors and investors. Consequently this bill at first glance or reading may appear complex but it is indeed necessary and logical and will provide protection for the authorised indicia and images. The bill therefore permits the provision of information for...
the purposes of reporting news and presentation of current affairs, the factual description of goods or services provided by a business (such as stating that accommodation is available at a hotel that is located near a Commonwealth Games site), or factual statements by an athlete to promote their own achievements. Consequently the bill strikes the correct balance between the commercial exploitation of the Commonwealth Games indicia and images and that which is part of common parlance and necessary for the reporting or promotion of the Games in everyday activities. Examples of criticism and review permitted by this bill include reports which are likely to appear in newspapers, magazines or similar periodicals, in radio and television broadcasts, or in cinematographic films.

The government also recognises that the reasonable needs of sporting bodies in relation to fundraising for and promotion of their preparation of athletes and teams for the M2006 Games should be allowed to continue. Those reasonable needs could involve use of the M2006 Games indicia or images for the purposes of providing factual information. The bill obviously is not intended to affect this type of use.

Similar to provisions contained in the Sydney 2000 Games Act, this bill also provides various remedies to the M2006 Corporation and authorised users to enforce their rights in relation to the Commonwealth Games indicia and images. This means the M2006 Corporation or an authorised user may bring an action against an unauthorised user—we would hope so. The remedies available under the bill include injunctions, damages and corrective advertising. The courts also have the discretion to provide remedies under any law (either state, territory or Commonwealth) and most notably, the Trade Practices Act 1974 in relation to engaging in conduct that is misleading or deceptive.

The bill also includes appropriate measures to limit the possibility of the importation of goods which seek to ambush the Games marketing. The Australian Customs Service will be able to carry out the measures of this legislation relating to the monitoring of imported goods at Australia’s borders.

The bill will have a limited period of application and will cease to have effect from 1 July 2006.

So you can see, Mr Deputy Speaker, that everything is roped—all bases are covered. Any unauthorised user of Commonwealth Games indicia or images will most certainly be identified and pursued under the full force of this legislation. There are no loopholes in this comprehensive, detailed legislation, based of course on the Sydney Olympics experience.

Mr Gavan O’Connor—We believe you—sit down.

Mr McGauran—I will draw my remarks to a close—

Mr Gavan O’Connor—That is what you said 10 minutes ago.

Mr McGauran—and present the explanatory memorandum.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Jenkins)—May I take the unusual step of indicating that the chair hopes that the minister from the other place appreciates the careful enunciation and additional commentary made by the Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs on this occasion.

Mr Gavan O’Connor—I was going to move an extension of time but he just went one bridge too far.

Debate (on motion by Mr Gavan O’Connor) adjourned.
SUPERANNUATION LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (CHOICE OF SUPERANNUATION FUNDS) BILL 2005

First Reading

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

Second Reading

Mr BROUGH (Longman—Minister for Revenue and Assistant Treasurer) (10.02 am)—I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

This bill gives effect to announcements made by the government earlier this year to ease the transition to superannuation choice for businesses and employees, and minimise the burden on employers in complying with their choice obligations.

The Superannuation Holding Account Special Account was originally established to receive small superannuation amounts from employers who cannot find a superannuation fund. This facility is no longer needed, as retirement savings accounts (RSAs) offer similar low-cost benefits for employers. This bill will amend the legislation to make the Superannuation Holding Account Special Account an eligible choice fund until 30 June 2006, giving employers a further year to make arrangements to contribute to a superannuation fund or retirement savings account. From 1 July 2006, the Superannuation Holding Account Special Account will be closed to new employer deposits.

This bill will amend the choice of fund legislation to specify additional circumstances where an employer does not have to provide an employee with the standard choice form, thus avoiding the imposition of unnecessary cost on some employers.

It is important that employees are not discouraged from exercising their right to choose a fund through the actions of their employer. This bill ensures that employers cannot recoup part or all of the administrative costs associated with implementing their choice of fund obligations by charging employees.

The choice legislation ensures that fund trustees do not try to inappropriately induce employers to move their employee’s contributions to the trustee’s fund by offering them personal incentives. This bill will make the Australian Securities and Investment Commission the agency that administers this provision.

The bill clarifies a number of matters, such as the test for whether a defined benefit fund is in surplus, the obligation on the employer to contribute to the fund specified as the default fund on the standard choice form, and the choice of fund penalty provisions. This bill is another of the bills that this government has put before the House building on our strong commitment to Australians building stronger and more secure retirement incomes and it follows from the earlier introduction today by the Treasurer of the abolition of the surcharge bill.

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

I commend this bill and present the explanatory memorandum.

Debate (on motion by Mr Rudd) adjourned.

TAX LAWS AMENDMENT (MEDICARE LEVY AND MEDICARE LEVY SURCHARGE) BILL 2005

First Reading

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

Second Reading

Mr BROUGH (Longman—Minister for Revenue and Assistant Treasurer) (10.05 am)—I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.
This bill will increase the Medicare levy low-income thresholds for individuals and families in line with increases in the consumer price index. The low-income threshold in the Medicare levy surcharge provisions will similarly be increased. These changes will ensure that low-income individuals and families will continue not to have to pay the Medicare levy or surcharge.

The bill will also increase the Medicare levy low-income threshold for pensioners below age pension age to ensure that where these pensioners do not have a tax liability they will also not have a Medicare levy liability.

The amendments will apply to the 2004-05 year of income and later years of income.

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

I commend this bill and present the explanatory memorandum.

Debate (on motion by Mr Rudd) adjourned.

AGED CARE AMENDMENT (EXTRA SERVICE) BILL 2005

First Reading

Bill presented by Ms Julie Bishop, and read a first time.

Second Reading

Ms JULIE BISHOP (Curtin—Minister for Ageing) (10.06 am)—I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

This bill demonstrates the government’s strong commitment to ensuring a robust and viable aged care sector for the future where the element of choice is a key ingredient for both residents and providers of aged care services. This bill implements one of the measures from the Australian government’s 2005-06 budget package.

Expansion of the Extra Service program will allow the sector to respond to rising consumer expectations through providing residents with increased choice in relation to hotel type services. At the same time, removing the requirement to renew Extra Service status after five years will both decrease red tape for providers and increase their ability to access capital for rebuilding or refurbishing.

The individual needs of older Australians remain this government’s priority. This measure seeks to increase the opportunity for consumer choice in residential aged care through the further reform of the Extra Service program. An aged care service with Extra Service status allows residents to choose, and pay for, a higher than average level of hotel type services, including accommodation, the range and quality of food and the provision of non-care services such as recreational and personal interest activities.

While government programs, including accreditation and certification, have raised significantly the standards of care and accommodation, Extra Service offers greater choice in non-care related services.

The Australian government is committed to ensuring that the aged care sector is capable of delivering high quality and affordable care to older Australians. In this bill it removes a significant impediment to expansion of the Extra Service program in aged care by removing some of the red tape involved.

Aged care providers have long felt that the high level of government regulation of the Extra Service program has stymied its expansion. In particular, they have singled out the requirement that they have to reapply for Extra Service status every five years—notwithstanding that during those five years they may have had no complaints and no problems with compliance. The process of reapplying for Extra Service status not only
is time consuming and expensive, because it involves looking at each and every ‘extra’ service which is offered by the particular home, but prevents long-term planning in relation to the capital needs of the home and may act as a deterrent to financiers and other investors.

Considerable investment in infrastructure is needed over the next decade to ensure the supply and quality of aged care homes grows in line with the increase in the number of older Australians who need care. The Australian government recognises that over the next decade there will be a continuing need for capital funding so that existing homes can be well maintained, new homes built and existing facilities refurbished.

The ability of the aged care industry to make this investment will depend on its ability to raise capital. The report on the Review of Pricing Arrangements in Aged Care by Professor Warren Hogan noted that there were significant levels of investment in new buildings and upgrading older buildings. It was reported that in 2002-03, $821.4 million of new building, refurbishment and upgrading work in aged care was completed, involving an estimated 22.8 per cent of all residential aged care services. A further $2 billion of building work was completed or under way in 2003-04 with 25 per cent of all homes planning new work.

The Australian government has invested almost $1 billion in aged care homes for capital improvements or as increases in subsidy payments. This included over $513 million, or $3,500 per resident, as a one-off payment to providers of residential services in recognition of the forward plan for improved building standards for aged care homes.

Aged care providers have argued that a lack of access to capital has been an impediment to the expansion of the Extra Service program. As well as building new homes, capital can be used to upgrade existing aged care homes to better provide quality buildings, furniture, fittings and equipment that enhance the comfort and amenity of residents. Services may choose to focus on delivering higher standards of amenity for those residents who elect to pay for these higher standards.

Growing demand, as the population ages, means that we must ensure that the aged care sector is sustainable over the long term. The challenge is to balance cost sharing with equity of access while continuing to improve the quality of care and the fabric of the buildings in which such care is delivered.

This measure, in allowing certainty for Extra Service providers and increasing their access to capital, will ultimately allow increased choice for consumers. This will not come at the expense of people who cannot afford to pay. The current limit of a maximum of 15 per cent of residential aged care places in each state or territory will remain to ensure that access to care is not affected for people who cannot afford to pay for Extra Service or do not desire such extra services.

These changes are the result of the government listening to people and responding to address these issues. We have acted in a timely and sensitive way to keep the benefits of the aged care reforms flowing to older Australians now and into the future. I commend this bill to the House and present the explanatory memorandum.

Debate (on motion by Mr Rudd) adjourned.
Ms LEY (Farrer—Parliamentary Secretary (Children and Youth Affairs)) (10.13 am)—I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

This bill will amend the social security law, the family assistance law and the Veterans' Entitlements Act 1986 to provide several important measures for families and for low-income Australians renting their homes.

Schedule 1 gives effect to a proposal announced by the government on 11 May 2004 as part of the More Help for Families package relevant to family tax benefit part B.

Part B is intended to assist families with one main income. In the case of couples, part B is paid on the basis of the income of the lower income earner provided that their income is under certain thresholds.

Under the current legislation, the income of a secondary earner who is a member of a couple and who commences paid work for the first time or returns to paid work part way during a particular income year following the birth is taken into account under the part B income test for that income year. This can result in a debt on reconciliation and may act as a disincentive for those wanting to return to the work force.

Schedule 1 introduces a new method of calculating part B applicable to secondary earners who, say, return to work for the first time following the birth of a child or the adoption of a child. The new method provides the secondary earner with the maximum rate of part B for the period in question provided that all the criteria for accessing the new method are met for the day or days in question.

This measure will be available to a secondary earner who is the natural parent or step-parent of the child. It will also be available to adoptive parents and other secondary earners who are primary carers (such as grandparents who commence work or return to work for the first time after assuming responsibility as a carer of a grandchild).

This measure will apply in respect of the 2005-06 income year and later income years.

Maternity payment was introduced from 1 July 2004 and currently provides $3,079, in a lump sum or instalments, to families with new children, including to adopting families who assume care of children up to 26 weeks of age. However, as a recent publication on adoptions from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare testifies, the majority of current adoptions in Australia are inter-country adoptions, which often happen when the children are older than 26 weeks because of the lengthy processes involved. Therefore, these adopting families have often missed out on the maternity payment.

The government has responded to this area of need by widening the maternity payment age range for adoptions. Maternity payment will be made available through this bill for children being adopted from another country who enter their new families’ care, and arrive in Australia, before age two. Maternity payment eligibility will also be extended for local adoptions, to families assuming care of children before age two, assuming maternity payment has not already been paid for the child under the current rules.

In a related measure, it is being clarified that maternity payment is not available for a child who has already attracted maternity allowance under the former scheme applying before 1 July 2004. This completes the transitional rules for the new payment.

This bill contains several other family assistance measures. Notable among these are amendments to lessen the impact of family tax benefit or child-care benefit debts that arise from the non-lodgment of income tax.
returns in situations where parents have separated and an ex-partner has not lodged the relevant income tax return to enable annual reconciliation of family tax benefit or child-care benefit to occur.

Lastly, the bill includes two measures to improve the administration of the rent assistance program for social security and family tax benefit. Rent assistance is paid to assist low-income people with the costs of renting their homes in the private rental market. Amendments are being made to prevent the possibility of rent assistance being paid to the same person twice—once with the person’s family tax benefit and once with their social security or veterans’ affairs payment. Further amendments will clarify that, when a person fails to give information regularly sought by Centrelink to confirm their ongoing rent assistance entitlement, the rent assistance portion of their family tax benefit or social security payment may be cancelled, rather than the whole benefit or payment, as currently provided.

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

Debate (on motion by Mr Rudd) adjourned.

COMMITTEES

Public Works Committee

Reference

Dr STONE (Murray—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Finance and Administration (10.18 am)—I move:

That, in accordance with the provisions of the Public Works Committee Act 1969, the following proposed work be referred to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works for consideration and report: Operational upgrade of the Darwin detention facility, Northern Territory.

The Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs proposes the provision of additional facilities at the Darwin Detention Facility, previously known as the Coonawarra Contingency Immigration Reception Facility.

In December last year, the government announced that a joint fisheries-immigration detention facility would be established at the existing contingency immigration facility located within the Defence Establishment Berrimah, previously known as HMAS Coonawarra.

The proposed work is required to enhance the amenity to meet the immigration detention standards and improve the security of the northern compound to enable the facility to operate on an ongoing basis. The current security arrangements are low key and not suitable for a detention facility operating on an ongoing basis. The works proposed include a security upgrade, medical facilities to provide primary medical care, a kitchen, interview facilities, disabled access and accommodation, ablutions, upgrading an existing building to cyclone shelter capacity, shaded structures, a services provider administration building and a storage area for detainee belongings. The estimated cost of the proposed works is $8.21 million. Subject to parliamentary approval, work is scheduled to commence in September this year and be completed by mid next year.

I commend the motion to the House.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Jenkins)—Before I give the call to the member for Chifley, he might be in a position to apologise to the House for the earlier interruption caused by his mobile telecommunication device.

Mr PRICE (Chifley) (10.20 am)—That goes without saying, Mr Deputy Speaker. I understand that the motion relates to the upgrade of the Darwin Detention Facility. Would the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Finance and Administration be able to advise me whether the upgrades would accommodate young children in that
detention centre? Does the parliamentary secretary have in mind an age bracket for the children who might be housed in that facility? Has any consideration been given to the length of time that children may spend in Darwin in that facility?

On the other hand, once the House has passed this motion, the Public Works Committee may be of a mind to take these matters on board and give thorough consideration to the structure, facilities and appropriateness of detaining children in detention centres. It is fair to say that there is a concern amongst some in the public about whether or not it is appropriate, for example, for children to be born in detention centres or to have very young children in detention centres not just for three years but for longer—that is, for them to spend all their young lives in detention centres. It is a horrible thing to contemplate. Unfortunately it is a matter of public record that this takes place.

So in the reference of this matter to the Public Works Committee—a committee that has provided sterling service in an impartial and unbiased way—I think we can have faith in the committee to thoroughly run down any of the issues that I have raised. Certainly, when the Public Works Committee is in Darwin I would hope that, as per usual, the committee will invite public submissions. The people in Darwin would be able to make submissions and would have the opportunity to speak to the committee and express any concerns they may have about these proposed works.

I want to round out by thanking the parliamentary secretary. It is a very proper process that the government is following here in referring this matter to the Joint Standing Committee on Public Works. Mr Deputy Speaker Jenkins, I know I cannot speak for you and I do not wish to do so, but I have to point out to you that there are many on this side of the House who share a concern about young children being in detention centres. In fact, I see some primary school students in the public gallery here today. What a thought—that one of them may be housed in a detention centre. I support the proposal, I am going to vote for it, I have every confidence in the committee and I am sure they will do their job.

Question agreed to.

**Public Works Committee**

**Approval of Work**

Dr STONE (Murray—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Finance and Administration (10.25 am)—I move:

That, in accordance with the provisions of the Public Works Committee Act 1969, it is expedient to carry out the following proposed work which was referred to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works and on which the committee has duly reported to Parliament: Development of land for Defence housing at McDowall in Brisbane, QLD.

Before I refer to the second project in terms of the Public Works Committee, in response to the Chief Opposition Whip let me assure him that, typically, women and children are not employed as fishers on Indonesian vessels but should they, perchance, be amongst those who are detained because of illegal activities, then quite obviously the Australian government has very substantial interest in those parties—women and children—being properly accommodated in detention. Throughout Australia we have appropriate places for women and children to be looked after, not only in detention facilities but also in off-detention facility accommodation, which includes housing and community accommodation. I thank the opposition for giving me that opportunity to straighten out this matter. Let me assure them that the Australian government conforms absolutely to the United Nations conventions in relation to
children in detention and will continue to do so.

With regard to this motion, the Defence Housing Authority proposes the development of land and the construction of 50 community standard, four-bedroom houses in the Brisbane suburb of McDowall. The suburb of McDowall is located 12 kilometres from the Brisbane city area and five kilometres from the Enoggera Army base. The estimated out-turn cost of the proposal is $17.5 million, which includes construction costs, civil works, headwork charges and professional fees.

In its report, the Public Works Committee has recommended that this proposal should proceed subject to the recommendations of the committee. The Defence Housing Authority agrees with the recommendations of the committee. Subject to parliamentary and Defence Housing Authority Board approval, the Defence Housing Authority would like to have the new residences available for allocation by November 2006 to coincide with the 2006-07 peak Defence posting cycle. I would like, on behalf of the government, to thank the committee for its support. I commend the motion to the House.

Question agreed to.

Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Committee
Membership

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Jenkins)—The Speaker has received advice from the government whip that he has nominated Mr C P Thompson to be a member of the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade in place of Mr Baldwin.

Mr VAILE (Lyne—Minister for Trade) (10.28 am)—by leave—I move:

That Mr Baldwin be discharged from the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade and that, in his place, Mr C. P. Thompson be appointed a member of the committee.

Question agreed to.

APPROPRIATION BILL (No. 1)
2005-2006

Cognate bills:

APPROPRIATION BILL (No. 2)
2005-2006

APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENTARY DEPARTMENTS) BILL (No. 1) 2005-2006

APPROPRIATION BILL (No. 5)
2004-2005

APPROPRIATION BILL (No. 6)
2004-2005

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 23 May, on motion by Mr Costello:

That this bill be now read a second time, upon which Mr Swan moved by way of amendment:

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

“whilst not declining to give the bill a second reading, the House condemns the Government for a Budget which:

(1) delivers grossly unfair tax relief which favours the highest income earners at the expense of ordinary Australian families;

(2) ignores the crippling effect of punishingly high effective marginal tax rates on workforce participation;

(3) imposes harsh conditions on the income of the most vulnerable members of the community;

(4) fails to invest in skills and infrastructure disregarding repeated warnings from the RBA and OECD about skills shortages and infrastructure bottlenecks;

(5) exposes Australians to the risk of higher interest rates as a result of capacity constraints and escalating economic imbalances;

(6) predicts a significantly slowing rate of real GDP growth to below the Australian long-
term average and considerably below world GDP growth;

(7) confirms continuing unsustainable current account deficits into the future;

(8) predicts a continuing increase in Australia’s foreign debt;

(9) predicts import growth to exceed export growth; and

(10) contains a proposed Future Fund which is focused on offsetting the superannuation liability of Commonwealth employees at the expense of sensible long-term investment in vital infrastructure”.

Mr CREAN (Hotham) (10.30 am)—On Monday evening, before the adjournment of this debate, I used the opportunity to highlight the failure of this budget to grasp the opportunity to address Australia’s trade crisis, a trade crisis which has been reflected in our worst ever export performance. I am delighted that the Minister for Trade is in the chamber to hear this dimension. It is an export performance that is holding Australia back and giving rise to unbalanced economic growth.

The stark conclusion is that it could have been different. If the government had continued Labor’s policies, our exports would not have flat lined over the past four years. If exports had continued to grow at the rate achieved by Labor, Australia would have recorded a trade surplus last year of $12 billion rather than a deficit of $26 billion—in other words, a $38 billion turnaround. Labor’s approach, which is an integrated trade and industry policy approach complemented by investment in education, skills and innovation, is what delivered strong, sustainable export growth for this nation. The fact that it has not been embraced by this government in this budget is a huge lost opportunity for the nation.

I want to now turn to two other dimensions. The future fund is the first. The Treasurer calls this a new initiative of his in the budget, but the truth is that it is another policy stolen from Labor. In May last year, I announced Labor’s intergenerational fund, a fund to put aside funds today to meet rising costs in the future associated with our ageing population and to really address this intergenerational challenge. At the time, true to form, the Treasurer ridiculed my idea. He has now embraced it. A man of ideas, this Treasurer—other people’s ideas. But, as always, the Treasurer has taken a minimalist approach to this fund. He has restricted the purpose to only meet public servants’ superannuation liabilities. Get this: everyone’s surplus is being used to pay the unfunded superannuation liability just of public servants. Because those same public servants have moved to accumulation funds, we also have the situation of a dwindling liability as the unfunded public sector superannuation liabilities and associated cash flows are already declining as a share of GDP.

When I raised the concept of an intergenerational fund I had a much bigger picture in mind. I raised it in order to promote a national debate about how we, as a nation, prepare for our future, by posing the question as to whether we are generating sufficient savings today necessary to meet the costs of tomorrow and also the big question as to whether we are making the investments today that will minimise the costs tomorrow. If we can make investments in the drivers of economic growth and get a better economic return than simply putting the money in the bank, the nation will be better off. That is what we should be addressing, and it is not what this future fund does. As important as it is, it was not simply about managing the balance sheet. It was also about meeting our responsibilities to the next generation.

I do not believe it is good enough for the Treasurer to simply produce an intergenerational report and then ignore the policy implications. Australia’s productive potential
requires the Treasurer to go further. Labor will push him further. We will give him some more ideas. We urge him to embrace those ideas, just as he has embraced this one, albeit in a minimalist way. We began the public debate and Kim Beazley began the process in his budget reply speech, outlining Labor’s plan for a building Australia fund, a fund that can be utilised to apply income for productive purposes, including investment in infrastructure. That is what Australia needs if we are going to address our infrastructure needs, and it is what Australia needs if all of us, not just the public servants, are going to benefit from the proceeds of asset sales.

Unfortunately, if the Telstra sale proceeds are directed to the fund, how long will it take for the Deputy Prime Minister and the Nationals to get their hands on that money, shovelling it out to their marginal electorates in regional development grants style—with the secret SONA guidelines—in the lead-up to an election? Given the Prime Minister’s initial inclination, we will have to wait to see if the governance arrangements attaching to this fund stand the test of time. On the basis of past practice, it does not look promising.

The other dimension that I want to address as a consequence of this budget is this whole issue of what the government claims to be the Charter of Budget Honesty. Government members harp on about it and the requirement that Labor have its policies fully costed by the Department of the Treasury and the Department of Finance and Administration. This process associated with the Charter of Budget Honesty has been so debased by the government that it has become a joke. The Charter of Budget Honest is only used to constrain the opposition during elections, while the government actually operates outside it.

In between elections, Labor has actually sought opportunities on a number of occasions to have our policy proposals properly costed and assessed by Treasury. For example, we asked the government to put our proposals for the savings under the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme to Treasury to avoid the need—and as the government will proceed to do—to hike up the cost of pharmaceuticals by 30 per cent for pensioners. We could not get it costed. We were prepared to have our policies put out there for public scrutiny as a result of assessment by Treasury, and we could not get it done. Similarly, we challenged the baby bonus and its costings and how it could be better spent. We could not get that costed either. But the dishonesty perpetrated under the name of the Charter of Budget Honesty was most exposed by the shameful performance of the Minister for Health and Ageing and his cast-iron guarantee during the election campaign on the Medicare safety net. It goes to the heart of the government’s dishonesty.

When first proposed in 2003, the safety net was expected to cost $260 million over four years. In March the revised cost was $440 million—in other words, it was already blowing out to double the initial amount. Following that blow-out, the minister gave his ‘cast-iron’ commitment that the safety net would continue. This is very revealing: in Senate estimates last night, the Minister for Finance and Administration admitted that he knew before the election was called—in other words, before 29 August—that the safety net was blowing out even more. Questions are: when was he told and by whom, and why didn’t he come clean? When did he tell the Treasurer, when did he tell the Prime Minister and when did he tell the health minister? On 2 September, having been told of the blow-out in the first week of the campaign, the finance minister went on ABC Radio and said in relation to the exercise that there was no cost blow-out.
What we have here is this: even though the government knew there was a cost blow-out, there was no requirement for it during the election campaign to submit its proposals for new costings by Treasury. Labor has to submit all of its proposals to Treasury, but not the government. This is a question of fiscal discipline. The government prides itself on its ability to manage the budget, but it was deceitfully hiding what we knew was a huge blow-out. During the election campaign, the Pre-election Economic and Fiscal Outlook—PEFO—showed that there was a further blow-out in the safety net but did not show the magnitude of the problem. The government avoided the Charter of Budget Honesty to cover up the blow-out. The real extent became apparent only on the day before the election, when Finance released costings for Labor’s Medicare Gold proposal. They costed the safety net at $1.3 billion.

Following the election and the broken promise, some people are now suggesting that the cost would have been as high as $1.65 billion. So what started as a $260 million proposal has blown out to $1.65 billion, but at no stage was the government forced to reveal it. What is honest about that in terms of the Charter of Budget Honesty? What I am saying is this: if the government will not comply, why should we? But, on a constructive note, what is needed is a means by which the opposition can have access on a confidential basis to Treasury and Finance to have their policies costed so that they can develop their policies on the basis of the true state of program costings, not outdated costings publicly available. If we get that confidential access, we can release policies and supporting costings at the time of our choosing. We are not opposed to having our policies costed, but it has to be fair and it has to equitable. If the government does not change the way it deals with the charter and if it is not required to deal with it itself, we would be better off exposing the charter for the sham that it currently is. If the government will not deal with it, why should we?

Mr CAUSLEY (Page) (10.40 am)—I am delighted to speak in the cognate debate on the Appropriation Bill (No. 1) 2005-2006. I am interested to follow the member for Hotham and to hear some of his statements at the end of his speech. I was wondering about the cost of Medicare Gold and what might have been some of the blow-out that would have occurred there. It is all very well to be wise in hindsight. I have to say that the member for Hotham cannot prove those types of things. He comes in here and huffs and puffs, but at the end of the day he does not have the figures to back it up.

Before I was in this place, I remember very clearly that there was a certain member of the opposition who, I think, at one stage, was the self-proclaimed world’s best Treasurer. That was interesting at the time, because subsequently he was proved to be not so successful. As far as Australia is concerned, I think we could honestly say that Treasurer Costello, whom the coalition government have had since they have been in government, has proven—to be a very successful Treasurer. If you look over the budgets during that period, you will find that to be the case. I know that members opposite will not agree, particularly the member for Oxley—that is natural. But I have to say that, if you look over the successive budgets and see what has been done in this country, particularly the strength of the economy, which has managed to go through some very severe world downturns—we had the Asian crisis, and practically the entire time this government has been in power the American economy has not been strong and has been, in fact, rather weak; in earlier times we used to say that if America has a cold we have
pneumonia—you will see that this particular time the Australian economy has been strong enough to overcome all those problems and has led the world.

As I have heard the Treasurer say, this is not a fluke. You have to work very hard at it. And I know the opposition try to take some claim, some benefit. That is natural too, because they are living in a huge shadow.

Mr Ripoll interjecting—

Mr CAUSLEY—The member for Oxley has been in the place only a short while, but he has been living in the shade of a huge shadow—the shadow of success—and he has never seen success, especially on the other side. I think that that is something that the opposition cannot come to terms with. They should have a look at some of Graham Richardson’s statements in recent days to see just where they are going at the present time.

Mr Ripoll—Wandering.

Mr CAUSLEY—Yes, he would be wandering, because he does not agree with the socialist theories of the unionists who sit over there.

I think we need to look closely at this budget and at what it does for the North Coast of New South Wales, for the electorate of Page that I represent. As I said in the debate yesterday, it is one of the poorest electorates in Australia. If you look at what has been done in this budget, you will see that it has given many benefits to the people in my electorate. In successive budgets we have increased the benefits to retirees, whether they be pensioners or self-funded retirees. If you look at the unemployment levels, you will see they have dropped in Page from 16 per cent down to nine per cent. And let us look at the programs that have been put in place by this government: Sustainable Regions, Regional Partnerships and even Roads to Recovery, which the opposition call ‘boondoggles’. I love it every time they say that, because, I tell you what, it proves just how successful I have been in my electorate. My electorate says to me, ‘They are good programs; you keep them going.’ We are going to look after the people who need the support of this government.

Let me go through some of these issues. It was interesting to look at our budget and then, this week, at the New South Wales state budget. I have had some involvement in the New South Wales state budget processes, as you would know, Madam Deputy Speaker Bishop. When we left government in New South Wales in 1995, the state Treasury receipts we had available for the budget that year were $25 billion. For the New South Wales budget that was handed down on Wednesday of this week, Premier Carr had available $38 billion. By any calculation, that is more than a 50 per cent increase in income. Madam Deputy Speaker, come to my electorate and I will challenge you to show me where money has been spent on public hospitals, public schools, and roads—which are a responsibility of the state. No money has been spent on those areas. Even on the dental scheme—which my colleague the member for Richmond says repeatedly is federal; she should look at the state budget because in there is a line item for it—no money has been spent. Where has the money gone? It will be a very interesting revelation when Bob Carr is kicked out at the next election and we get to the books and see exactly where this money has gone, because that is the big story in New South Wales.

Look, for example, at the federal budget, especially at AusLink. This is a far-sighted project that looks at Australia’s transport needs and not just for roads and rail but also for shipping—all the transport needs of this nation. Studies have shown that, in the next 10 to 15 years, freight in Australia will double. At least the federal government is looking forward and saying, ‘What are we going
to do with transport?’ because it is so important for the economy of this country. We are an exporting nation. As the Leader of the National Party and Deputy Prime Minister says continually, most of our exporting operations begin from rural Australia; that is where they start. Roads and rail are so important to this country’s exports.

In New South Wales alone, we are going to spend $800 million on rail. Rail has not been upgraded to any extent since Nick Greiner spent money on it. Very little money was spent before then. Nick Greiner spent money on rail, putting in longer sidings. He fought with the unions over whether we should lengthen the trains we have in Australia and abolish guard vans; they did not want that. However, we now have decent trains pulling 30 per cent more freight across the rail lines in New South Wales.

What is important here is that, if we do not do something about rail, the number of semitrailers on our highways will treble. Something has to be done, and I have great faith in this. If it were just the government doing it, especially a state government, I would not have any faith. But I have faith because I believe it will not be the government that will be running the railway. Already interest has been shown by some of the big freight companies in Australia; they have indicated that they at least will hire the line and use it to move freight around Australia. If those companies are to be involved, I believe it will work, because these are the same companies that have trucks on roads. If they can see themselves becoming involved in rail, obviously there will be a reduction in the number of trucks on our roads.

Let me go to the Pacific Highway, because that is the major artery, as we know, between Brisbane and Sydney; and, with the Hume Highway to Melbourne, the major artery in Australia. Just before we came to government in New South Wales in 1995, when I was a candidate, the budget for the Pacific Highway from Port Macquarie, in the electorate of the member for Lyne, up to the Queensland border was $25 million. Premier Wran had been to Tweed Heads in the election campaign and had promised the construction of the Tweed Heads bypass into Queensland—it had been promised about 15 years previously but had never been built. Russ Hinze, in Queensland, after finishing the new highway down south, said, ‘I wonder where that wonderful minister from New South Wales is? He promised he’d link this.’ But they never had. Premier Wran promised $25 million to build the Tweed Heads bypass. I remember the divisional engineer in my area on the North Coast of New South Wales saying, ‘What am I going to do to maintain the highway, when my total budget has just been promised for a bypass?’ It was the coalition government that decided to spend money on roads. Madam Deputy Speaker, you would well remember ‘3x3’, which went entirely to roads. But, if we look now, that money is not going to roads.

This government, through AusLink, has said it will spend $675 million on the state Pacific Highway—and it is a state highway. What did we see in the New South Wales budget? For instance, there is a bypass for Ballina. The federal government, through AusLink, has said it will contribute $125 million for the bypass for Ballina, which is half its cost. But there was not one dollar for it in the state government’s budget. The former member for Richmond two elections ago received $15 million for a bypass to Alstonville.

Mr Ripoll—It didn’t help him.

Mr CAUSLEY—We can come back to that in another debate, Member for Oxley. I might tell you about some of the corruption that exists in your party. Anyway, that was
$15 million two elections ago, and the state government said, ‘Oh, yes, when we are trying to win the seat of Richmond, we’ll fund it.’ There has not been one dollar. Seeing we have raised the matter of the seat of Richmond, let me make a few comments about it. We have a state railway that goes from Casino to Murwillumbah, for which the federal government promised there would be some contribution.

Mr Ripoll interjecting—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. BK Bishop)—The member for Oxley has kept up a continuous babble for the last 10 minutes. I ask him to desist.

Mr CAUSLEY—Do not worry, Madam Deputy Speaker; I know when I am hurting them. When he is babbling, I know he is getting hurt. The railway line from Casino to Murwillumbah is a state line. During the election campaign, the shadow minister for transport, the honourable member for Batman, came to the North Coast and said, ‘You vote for us and we will give you $150 million for the Casino line’—they wanted to win a seat. What has happened since? I have not heard one peep out of the member for Richmond about the railway line from Casino to Murwillumbah, and yet I see statements in the media saying, ‘Well, I’m one of these members who wants to work with everyone and I want to try and get things done. I don’t want any of this fighting between states and the federal government.’ That is convenient, isn’t it, because she does not want to reveal just how the New South Wales state government, which happens to be Labor, is neglecting the North Coast of New South Wales.

Let me go to another point where the federal government has come to the fore. I was approached about two years ago by the regional health department, which said that the North Coast of New South Wales had been identified as an area of need as far as oncology treatment, the treatment of cancer, was concerned. So I went to the Minister for Health and Ageing, Minister Abbott, and said: ‘Obviously this report has revealed a problem. Can we do something about it?’ To his credit, he said: ‘Yes, I accept that report. I accept that there is a need. I will give my share of the funding, which is $6 million, to the oncology unit at Lismore Base Hospital.’ The problem is that the state government have to build the building for the linear accelerator. The area they have identified is where Richmond Clinic is, which is the mental health area at present. They have to shift Richmond Clinic across the road and build it. Then they have to build a new building for oncology.

I hear every few weeks—in fact, on a regular basis—the health department on the North Coast saying, ‘We are going to spend $90 million on this hospital to upgrade the facilities.’ It has become a tedious repetition in the media. It does not happen. We do have some funding in the state government at present for the relocation of Richmond Clinic—but let me put it to you that, if I am generous in my estimation, it will take two years to build it. Then of course they have to rebuild the old clinic. That is probably another two years. The money for oncology that I fought for is being stymied by the state government, even though the federal government have committed to it in the budget. We have committed to it but we are being stymied because the state government will not be ready to put together their part of the bargain, on a generous estimate, for at least four or five years. I find that quite frustrating, to say the least.

Education is instructive, too, in certain ways. The government announced, during the election campaign, funding for the Australian technical colleges. One of those was to be in the Lismore-Ballina area, which is obviously central to that whole northern area...
between the Tweed and Grafton. That is great. The local area believed it, too. We had some very successful meetings with one of the local high schools, Ballina High School; the TAFE college, which was keen to get involved; and the local community. They put together a local community based committee to make an application for an Australian technical college. They got the principals together to be involved in a board to run the Australian technical college. But you can bet on it. You have got it. The Department of Education and Training in New South Wales told the high school and the TAFE that they cannot be involved. They have to adhere to Labor Party principles in New South Wales.

The TAFE college has gone forward and made an application. My problem with this is that I want to be assured, for that application, that an independent board is going to be involved in the management of the Australian technical college. I will not have a bar of the New South Wales Department of Education and Training having control of it. We all know what will happen—we have seen it in the past. They will take the money but they will not do the work. That is what has been happening time and again with the New South Wales Department of Education and Training having control of it. We all know what will happen—we have seen it in the past. They will take the money but they will not do the work. That is what has been happening time and again with the New South Wales Department of Education and Training having control of it. This definitely is a prospect, but obviously it is important that the minister keep a very close eye on it to see how this proposition is put forward.

Another area of support to public schools and independent schools, capital works, has been accepted with open arms in my electorate. Yet I am very sorry for the public schools because since the coalition government left office in New South Wales there has been no spending on maintenance on public schools in my area. Some of them are very run-down. You do have to feel sorry for them because there is an exodus of children, students, from the public system to some of the independent schools. Why? Because the state government is not looking after the public system. Parents are opting to pay extra, more money—that is what people never admit—to send their child to an independent school, whereas they have the right to go to a public school and might do so if the public school were maintained. That is the real basis of a lot of the problems in the education process in New South Wales that the Teachers Federation is trying to blame on everyone else. I can assure you that the public schools in my area are actively engaged in putting forward projects they see as necessary for the improvement of the facilities they might have to offer to students on the North Coast.

Sustainable Regions is a very important project. As I said earlier, when I became the member for Page the unemployment rate on the North Coast of New South Wales was 16 per cent. That included that grand scheme of the previous Labor government, where we had people on all sorts of projects. I think the member for Hotham was the minister at the time. Some of the ill-gotten gains from the sale of Qantas and the Commonwealth Bank were squandered on trying to get people onto these programs to sit on the sides of roads—that was all they were doing. In spite of that, 16 per cent was the unemployment rate. Our government naturally and rightly said, ‘We need to do something about disadvantaged areas.’ You might also recall that the Deputy Prime Minister held a summit at Orange during the period that a lot of regional Australia was seeing the exodus of banks and other institutions from their towns, which was putting a lot of pressure on those towns, so Regional Solutions and Regional Partnerships came into effect.

I am pleased to say that I have been able to hand out more than $8 million to industries in the Lismore, Grafton, Kyogle and Casino area who have been able to prove that they have a sustainable future and show that
they are going to employ more people. In fact, they are employing more people. We have the unemployment rate down to nine per cent. That is still roughly double the national average, so there is more to be done, but it is certainly having an effect. I implore the member for Wills to keep on saying what he was saying—that this is a National Party rort and that this is a boondoggle. I cannot get better advertising than that in my electorate. It highlights exactly what we are doing for these disadvantaged areas. The average wage in my electorate is around $35,000. I have a high retiree population, who are on pensions or modest superannuation. It is not a very rich area and it needs all the support it can get. It always has. (Time expired)

Mr SERCOMBE (Maribyrnong) (11.01 am)—The budget highlights a number of very disappointing aspects of the Howard government’s approach to our relations with our Pacific island neighbours. The more impressive of the Costello brothers recently had an excellent op-ed piece in some of the newspapers in which he described the Australian budget as showing a lack of vision. Tim Costello went on to talk about the budget as a missed opportunity in the context I am referring to. I certainly concur with Tim Costello that the government’s approach to the Pacific lacks vision, strategic thinking and a genuine sense of partnership—and our Pacific neighbours know that. Today I will seek to outline some of the sorts of forward-looking policies that are needed to promote a genuine partnership with our Pacific neighbours and to ensure that development assistance is effective now and in the long term.

In the 1970s there was a US television series called The Six Million Dollar Man about a man who ran around saving the world. Now the Howard government, in bringing us Alexander Downer, has got ‘the two-billion dollar man’, who runs around mucking up our relationships with the Pacific. Mr Downer has made two $1-billion errors of judgment: firstly in the Solomon Islands and now in Papua New Guinea with the Enhanced Cooperation Program. Let us be clear from the outset: Labor supports the RAMSI intervention in the Solomons and Labor supports the Enhanced Cooperation Program. These initiatives are important and necessary, and I have been extremely impressed over recent months, having visited both countries, with the quality of Australian personnel in both RAMSI and the Enhanced Cooperation Program. What is at stake here, frankly, arises from Mr Downer’s incompetence: his failure to assist the Solomon Islands much earlier, which would have saved significant numbers of lives and significant amounts of Australian taxpayers’ dollars, and, more recently, his failures in planning and implementing the Enhanced Cooperation Program.

According to the budget papers, the ECP was to cost $1.1 billion over five years. I would regard that as a lot of money. When the government commits $1 billion to a program, we can only assume that the government regards it as a pretty important program. It was meant to be Australia’s key program in Papua New Guinea, assisting in the restoration of law and order. Yet here we are, only a few months down the track, with Australian police being withdrawn because the ECP legislation was found by the Supreme Court of PNG to be unconstitutional. We really only have two explanations here: either the minister did not get advice on the constitutionality of the program or the minister got such advice and he ignored it. It does not really matter, frankly, to the Australian taxpayer which explanation is true. In either case it highlights incompetence in committing $1 billion of taxpayers’ money on such flimsy foundations. Yet the minister has sought to evade responsibility for his incom-
petence and to blame his PNG ministerial colleagues. That is certainly not the mark, I would have thought, of a mature person conducting sensitive diplomacy with our neighbours. On 16 May when he was commenting on the drafting of the ECP legislation, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Downer, said:

... we weren’t involved ...

His Papua New Guinean ministerial colleagues are not putting up with that, and I do not blame them, because they know the minister is wrong and is not revealing the truth. On 17 May, when commenting on the provisions of the ECP legislation that the PNG Supreme Court had ruled to be unconstitutional, PNG police minister Bire Kimisopa, who is in Canberra presently, said:

... these are the things that both Governments, the Australian and the PNG Government, knew very well ...

A couple of days later Sir Rabbie Namaliu, the PNG foreign minister, who is also in Canberra as we speak, said in relation to the same legislation:

A statement made by the Australian Foreign Minister ... that Australia was not involved in the preparation of the legislation ... was both unfortunate and incorrect.

... ... ... ...

The suggestion that somehow Australia was in the dark when it came to the final ECP legislation is totally and simply incorrect.

The minister is so incompetent that, when he has made a monumental error, he cannot get his lines straight with his PNG ministerial colleagues. Let us be frank about this. The ECP was in some trouble even before the PNG Supreme Court made its decision. A lot of that problem has been due to the Howard government’s arrogant attitude to PNG and the Pacific generally. Quite naturally, that arrogance puts people offside.

On 10 April this year we had the unfortunate spectacle of Mr Downer presuming to provide Papua New Guinea with some cultural criticism. The idea of this fine example of the Adelaide establishment—a bit of a toff from Adelaide—lecturing the PNG people on egalitarianism is ridiculous and offensive to us as well as to the Papua New Guineans. Would Mr Downer have presumed to speak in these disparaging terms about our developed country partners, or does he simply follow the philosophy espoused by his ideological colleague, John Bolton, of ‘kissing up’ and ‘kicking down’? Is this really the best we can expect from Australia’s top diplomat? Do we really want other countries thinking Mr Downer is the best Australia has to offer? His insensitivity and incompetence has endangered a crucial program to Australia’s national interests and is endangering the delicate political negotiations that are now necessary to get this program back on track.

The two-billion dollar man has another failing, this time in the Solomon Islands. In 2000 the Solomon Islands government pleaded with Mr Downer and the Australian government for assistance, which Mr Downer cursorily refused to provide.

Mr Hardgrave—Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise on a point of order. My learned friend seems to be struggling, so I thought I would take a point of order and ask him to address the foreign minister by his correct title. I think that would be preferred in this place.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. BK Bishop)—I take the point of order and ask the member for Maribyrnong to do so.

Mr SERCOMBE—in January 2003 the foreign minister wrote that Australia would not intervene in the Solomon Islands because ‘it would not work.’ But what do we find some six months later? The Minister for Foreign Affairs finally recognises the blindingly
obvious: a failing state on Australia’s doorstep is not an outcome that we want and the RAMSI intervention is necessary. According to the budget papers RAMSI will cost close to $1 billion from 2005 to 2009. It is worth reflecting, however, on what the foreign minister wrote in January 2003:

Sending Australian troops would be folly in the extreme. It would be widely resented in the Pacific region. It would be very difficult to justify to Australian taxpayers.

Mr Downer has been wrong on all those counts. Frankly, he has great difficulty justifying his bungling and his failures in these respects, given the volumes of money that Australian taxpayers are being asked to commit to these particular programs.

We need to find a way ahead in Papua New Guinea so we can continue the important Enhanced Cooperation Program. There is now a chance to re-evaluate and design an improved ECP, one that will win more support from PNG opinion leaders. For example, instead of us just sending Australians to PNG, let’s have PNG police and more public servants come to Australia as well. As a reward for high performance, PNG police could spend up to two or three months on a secondment in Australia. They could work side by side with their Australian counterparts to improve their community policing skills. This two-way exchange would convey a much better sense of partnership and shared learning and would remove a lot of the current angst. Obviously, there would be some significant administrative issues to be worked out in this respect, but I believe such an approach would be more genuinely reflective of a partnership and would have widespread support. Where Australia’s crucial national security interests are on the line, we have to be creative, we have to be ambitious and we have to do a much more competent job than this minister has been able to do to date.

Another disappointing aspect of the budget, as Tim Costello—the much more impressive member of the Costello family—made clear in his op-ed piece recently, is the aid budget and its lack of focus on the United Nations’ Millennium Development Goals. What is lacking in the government’s strategy on the Pacific is a comprehensive strategy to assist Pacific countries to realise these goals.

It is perhaps worth reminding the government of what these goals are: eradicating extreme poverty and hunger; achieving universal primary education; promoting general equality and empowering women; reducing child mortality; improving maternal health; combating HIV-AIDS, malaria and other diseases; ensuring environmental sustainability; and developing a global partnership for development. But this government appears to have some sort of ideological objection, perhaps because of its well-known record on multilateralism, to providing the sort of full-blooded support for those goals that people like the Chancellor of the Exchequer in the United Kingdom, Gordon Brown, have been able to provide—along with some passion for developed countries providing assistance to developing countries.

We need to significantly improve our performance in relation to development assistance. Currently, 36 per cent of our aid program goes on good governance compared to only 12 per cent on health, 14 per cent on education and nine per cent on rural development. That last figure on rural development is a bit ironic, given that the vast majority of Pacific Islanders live in rural areas. In Papua New Guinea, something like 85 per cent of the population live in rural areas. It is not a matter of shifting money from one program to another, from security to poverty reduction. Rather, we need to increase the aid budget to meet the poverty reduction targets identified in the Millennium Development Goals. The government boasts that the per-
centage of aid to gross national income is 0.28 per cent this coming year. This is still well short of the 0.32 per cent of GNI achieved by the Keating government, and that is reflected in the lack of money flowing into basic poverty reduction programs.

I recently had the opportunity to spend a couple of weeks in Papua New Guinea and to observe a number of aid programs in that country, in addition to the ECP. I must say that Australia is fortunate to have some extremely impressive people, but a much more cohesive and systematic strategy is needed in order to get maximum value. One example I can give to the House relates to a visit I made to Daru, which is the administrative capital of the Western Province. The Western Province is crucial to Australia because it borders Australia at the Torres Strait. People who have had the opportunity to visit an island like Saibai, for example, would know that, were it not for the crocodiles, even someone like me could swim across—it is very close indeed. It is also one of two provinces of Papua New Guinea that border Indonesia.

When one visits Daru one is immediately impressed by an excellent police station which has been built, as I understand it, substantially by AusAID support in Daru. It is a police station better than any other I have seen in PNG. It would be at least up to the average standard for an Australian police station. But what is the problem? There it is, right on the Australian border, and the police station does not have radio communications. The radio communications do not work. It is a maritime environment, so they have a boat—but the boat does not function. The cars do not function. Furthermore, the police station is built right next to the town’s water supply and there is a pipe leaking large volumes of water under the police station. One would have to expect that the foundations of this recently completed AusAID project are at some risk as a consequence of that. From my observations, it seems that frankly not a lot is being done to ensure that there is a cohesive, systematic approach rather than putting up what is admittedly a very fine building without understanding that there are a range of other matters involved. I emphasise that this is an area of crucial strategic importance to Australia because it borders both Australia and Indonesia.

Another area of our aid program which I strongly believe needs to be supported much more intensively than it is at the moment and in a strategic way is our sporting links. As a Victorian, I must confess that I have a passion for Australian rules but not necessarily so much for rugby league, despite the state of origin.

Mr Hardgrave—A great result!

Mr SERCOMBE—Yes, it was a good result. Nonetheless, the reality is that rugby league is a passion in Papua New Guinea. It is one of the things that unites people from Bougainville in the east to the Sepik in the west. It is a passion, and it is a nation-building possibility. There are a variety of quite innovative and ambitious programs that Australia could support. For example, I received an email the other day from the administrator of the Papua New Guinea Rugby League, in which he talked about the need for a rugby league academy. He has proposed several options. He talked about a boarding school in Lae that is being sold. It has four dormitory blocks, 15 staff houses, two rugby league fields, undercover basketball and volleyball courts and a small swimming pool. He has put forward the proposal that this academy cater for 20 players of selected age groups from around the country, who could stay there and attend schools in the local school system. After school the boys could be put on intensive training programs to assist their rugby league develop-
ment. He also talked about utilising the facilities at the National Sports Institute at Goroka in the highlands as an alternative to that. I think that is an excellent idea and one that I strongly urge the Sports Commission and AusAID to give very serious attention to.

There are a number of significant figures in Australian rugby league who are presently very interested in promoting a foundation that would be a partnership between government and the private sector to identify elite Papua New Guinean rugby league players and give them the opportunity to be mentored and developed within the framework of some of Australia’s elite rugby league clubs. Once again, this would be at relatively low cost and is an excellent proposition. I hope that in the intermediate term, given the passion and skills of Papua New Guineans in this area, the opportunity can be found, over time, to allow the readmission of a Papua New Guinean side to perhaps initially the Queensland Rugby League. This could ultimately lead to the formation of a genuinely Australasian rugby league in which Papua New Guinea could have at least one side competing.

It is hard to imagine a more important nation-building exercise for a country such as Papua New Guinea. Ground development is an area in which Australia could assist at, frankly, relatively low cost. Certainly in four of the major centres—Port Moresby, Goroka, Kokopo and Lae—Australia could support Papua New Guinea to create the sorts of environments that would allow significant interaction with Australian sides through participation in a rugby league.

These are the sorts of notions we ought to be focusing on. We ought to be focusing on genuinely promoting a sense of partnership. Australia is often referred to as the ‘big brother’ of the Pacific. Sometimes—rarely—this is said as thanks for advice and assistance. At other times it is a reference to us as a big bully. Frankly, as I indicated earlier, this government’s dealings with Pacific Island countries in recent times, including with Papua New Guinea, have been seen by them as being characterised by arrogance, hectoring and heavy-handed behaviour. We have to genuinely provide leadership and imagination, and we have to move Australia towards being a leader in realising the great opportunities before us, establishing a new era of Pacific relations, pursuing Pacific integration and working to halve global poverty by 2015, as set out in the UN millennium goals.

This has to be done in partnership. It has to be done constructively by working with countries rather than hectoring them. Rather than having an incompetent minister running around and, through his own failure to seek adequate legal advice, putting at risk a $1 billion program over some five years that is crucial to Australia and to PNG, it has to be characterised by a minister who is prepared to act in a timely manner on these matters. We cannot have a minister who sits back, as when former Prime Minister of the Solomons Bart Ulufa’alu requested assistance in 2000 prior to the descent of the Solomon Islands into total chaos—a minister who simply could not see the need to take necessary action some six months prior to the RAMSI intervention.

The RAMSI intervention has been an outstanding success; there is no doubt about that. In some pockets, there continue to be serious problems. I understand, Madam Deputy Speaker Bishop, that you have recently been in the Solomons, and you would have seen some of the considerable success. There are still pockets of difficulty. The heavily populated island of Malaita continues to present fairly serious security risks, and so on. Nonetheless, the mission has been an outstanding success. But it would have been a much better success—a much better
outcome from the point of view of the lives of the Solomon Islanders, the lives that would have been saved by earlier action, and Australian taxpayers—and would have been associated with significantly reduced costs if the minister had taken prompt action in 2000, rather than sitting back and letting the sore of a failing state continue to fester. We cannot allow that to happen in our region, because if we do not assist in resolving problems there others may. We have a very strong strategic interest in engaging in the Pacific, but it is a strategic interest that has to be characterised by a genuine spirit of partnership, not by hectoring or by being Big Brother.

Mr BARTLETT (Macquarie) (11.21 am)—It is an expected part of the post-budget ritual to see the opposition scratching around trying to find something negative to say and something to criticise. But Labor's efforts this time, from the Leader of the Opposition down, have been very ordinary to say the least. They simply highlight the difference between a sound, responsible budget on one hand and a paucity of policy on the other. In evaluating a budget, what is that we are looking for? What is it that average, ordinary Australians want to see in a good budget? I suggest that there are four criteria. Firstly, does a budget allocate funding to important areas of need and important policy priorities? Secondly, does it undertake necessary reform? Thirdly, does it, where possible, reduce the tax burden on working Australians and their families? Fourthly, is it fiscally and economically responsible immediately and in the longer term? They are probably the four key criteria for a good budget.

This budget clearly delivers in all four of these areas. The contrast between this budget—between a solid, sound, responsible budget that delivers—and Labor's approach, exemplified either in its appalling record or in its current lack of direction, could not be clearer. Let me point this out in respect to these four criteria. First of all, in terms of funding priorities, this budget substantially increases allocations for those areas that our community considers to be important. It substantially increases funding for health, for education, for vocational training, for environment and water programs, for transport and infrastructure, and for defence and national security. This budget delivers increased funding for those areas of need. What do we see from the other side? We see no clear funding direction, no clear policy direction and its normal prevarication, uncertainty and confusion.

On the second criterion, in the area of reform, this budget offers a $3.6 billion package to assist Australians to move from welfare to work, to make it easier for people to make that transition, to develop productive working lives again, to put our welfare system back onto a more sustainable footing. Again, what do we see in contrast from the other side? Again we see opposition for opposition's sake, typical of what we have seen in the past. We have seen opposition to welfare reform in the past. We saw opposition to taxation reform some years ago from the Labor Party. We have seen opposition to industrial relations reform. Their modus operandi is to oppose for opposition's sake. They focus more on political point scoring than on policy development and implementation.

The third criterion is in the area of tax reduction. A good budget ought, where possible, to relieve the taxation burden on hard-working Australians. This budget delivers a $21.7 billion cut in income taxes over the next four years, in addition to the $14.7 billion already allocated in last year's budget. They are substantial, real and deliverable tax cuts. Again, what do we have from the opposition? We have Dreamtime promises which they will never be able to deliver—and
which they know they will never have to deliver—based on misguided politics of envy rather than on what is really needed. Their response has been to obstruct, to delay and to obfuscate.

The fourth criterion of a good budget is in the area of fiscal responsibility. Here the contrast could not be clearer. There is probably a greater contrast here than in any of the other areas. This is the government’s eighth surplus budget, a surplus of $8.9 billion, one that keeps downward pressure on interest rates and establishes a future fund so that we are able to pay our way in the future and to look after the needs of an ageing population. Just compare that with Labor’s approach and record of high debt, high deficit and high interest rate policy that ran up almost $70 billion worth of debt in their last five budgets, pushing home loan interests to 17 per cent and business rates even higher, which crippled many businesses around the country. Rather than building for the future, this was well on the way to devouring our future.

I want to turn my attention in detail to a couple of these areas. Firstly, I want to return to some of the key policy areas in terms of increased funding, and focus particularly on education. In this budget we have seen an increase of $2.4 billion in spending on education, bringing the total to $20 billion—an increase of 12.9 per cent on education and vocational training. That includes a number of very important areas. A 7.4 per cent increase in much-needed funding for our schools includes $635 million for capital grants, up by 29 per cent, including the first step in the government’s terrific $1 billion Investing in our Schools program. That is a great boost for many of our local public, Catholic and independent schools and it addresses the needs that our state governments have tragically failed to address.

We heard just in the last week Professor Tony Vinson slam the New South Wales government and the New South Wales education department for their appalling neglect of the physical needs of our public schools in New South Wales. Professor Vincent said that $180 million was needed immediately to overcome those maintenance issues that the state Labor government has ignored for year after year. This government, in this budget, allocates $635 million for school capital works. This will start to address those needs but, as part of this Investing in our Schools program, that part of the money will go directly to our schools so the state governments cannot siphon off that money to prop up their inefficient bureaucracies. Further, in this budget, there is a boost of $139 million for the Australian Quality Teaching program, $498.6 million for the Literacy and Numeracy and Special Needs program, and $505 million for Indigenous education. In the area of training and vocational education, this budget continues to deliver to address the skill needs of our work force with a record $2.5 billion for training and vocational education, the establishment of 24 Australian technical colleges for secondary students, $12.6 million for an extra 5,000 New Apprenticeship Access program places, and $5.8 million towards an extra 7,000 school based new apprenticeships.

This government has demonstrated up until now and in this budget that it is serious about catering for the needs of the 70 per cent of our community who do not go to university. As an illustration of that, we currently have 394,000 new apprentices in training in this country, almost treble that paltry figure of 144,000 when Labor left office. They had driven apprenticeship numbers to a 30-year low. We have rebuilt those to almost treble that level. While I am on education funding, we promised last year prior to the election that we would deliver capital fund-
ing for the University of Western Sydney. I am delighted that this budget allocates $25 million over the next three years for the University of Western Sydney, including preparation, the groundwork, for a medical school for UWS, for which the members for Lindsay, Parramatta, Mitchell and McArthur and I had been campaigning and lobbying. This budget also includes $2 million for scientific and technical equipment for the University of Western Sydney Hawkesbury campus, which is particularly dear to my heart.

In the area of health care this budget spends $45 billion, up from $20 billion when Labor was in office. That is a 125 per cent increase in health care under the Howard government, including in this budget a number of very worthwhile and valuable new initiatives: $196 million for new cancer screening, awareness, treatment, support and research programs; $321 million over five years for early intervention and additional care services for people suffering dementia; ongoing funding for a number of our other programs to make Medicare stronger, including making GP services more affordable by raising the Medicare rebate to 100 per cent of the schedule fee; ongoing funding for the Medicare safety net, which Labor could not even dream of being able to implement; investment in more local GP out-of-hours services; and more aged care places. Across the whole range of health care services this budget continues this government’s proud record of delivering.

The third area that we need to consider is income tax cuts. Again, a fundamental criterion of a good budget is that it is one which returns to taxpayers, where it can, the dividends of a strong, prosperous and growing economy. That has been the record of this government. That has been our approach: to get the economy on a sound footing with strong economic growth and responsible policies and, where we can, return the dividends of that growth to our taxpayers. We did it in 2000, remember, when, as part of the new taxation system, we delivered not only much needed reforms but also $12 billion in personal income tax relief and a net tax cut of $6 billion. We did it last year with $14.7 billion worth of income tax cuts and we continue that proud record in this budget with another $21.7 billion worth of income tax cuts. These cuts are necessary, deserved, deliverable and affordable because of our sound management.

What do they include? From July this year, the tax threshold for those on low incomes will drop from 17 per cent to 15 per cent. So every income tax paying Australian will receive an income tax cut. In July this year and next year we will raise the thresholds for the 42 per cent and 47 per cent marginal income tax rates. The effects of that as part of $21.7 billion in income tax cuts will mean that 80 per cent of Australian taxpayers will be on a marginal tax rate of 30 per cent or less; from July next year only three per cent of Australian workers will be on the top marginal tax rate. What does cutting the effective tax rate or raising the thresholds at those middle and higher levels mean? It means that there will now be extra incentive for those who work hard, for those tradesmen who want to do a few hours of overtime and for those self-employed small business-people putting in long hours of hard work with their families. It will also reduce the incentive for our brightest and best to leave to work overseas because income tax rates are lower or the thresholds are much higher there. It will also reduce the incentive for tax minimisation by incorporation to take advantage of lower corporate tax rates.

No government for years and years has been willing to address the issue of those thresholds for middle- and high-income earners to address the issue of bracket creep. At last we have a government that has the
courage to do it. Just look at the figures. If you go back 30 years to 1975, the highest income tax rate did not cut in until 5.19 times average weekly earnings. Yet, up until now, because of bracket creep, it has started to cut in at 1.3 times average weekly earnings. This adjustment, which is well overdue, will restore it to about two times average weekly earnings to again introduce some incentive into our tax system.

I want to make a few further points about Labor’s approach to taxation. The first point I would make is that again Labor is demonstrating that it wants to walk both sides of the street. On 3 February this year we had the Leader of the Opposition arguing in the Sydney Morning Herald that the top tax rate cut in too soon and that it was catching too many tradesmen who wanted to do some overtime. It was okay for him to argue that when he did not have to deliver but, now that there is a chance that we will deliver it and we are asking him to support it, he no longer wants to support it. Again he wants to walk two sides of the street, saying one thing in one context and something else in another. When he can support it he squibs the issue. Labor has traded in principle and policy for cheap populism. It is a slap in the face for the aspirational worker and, in fact, Labor has cremated that famous ladder of opportunity that it made so much about by wanting to oppose these tax cuts for middle- and high-income earners.

The second point I would make is that Labor’s supposed income tax cuts would carry no guarantee of providing tax cuts for senior Australians, because of the way they want to implement it through their welfare to work bonus. So for some people these promised, so-called tax cuts are illusory.

The third point I would make is that these tax cuts continue this government’s support for low-income Australians as well. It is worth pointing out that single parents have seen their tax threshold in the years this government has been in office rise from $34,502 to $44,951—that is a 30.3 per cent increase in the threshold for single parents on 67 per cent of average weekly earnings. A single-income couple on average weekly earnings has seen their real tax-free threshold rise by 32.5 per cent. The recent report by the National Centre for Social and Economic Modelling shows clearly that this government has been delivering for low-income workers and families. The bottom line is that Labor cannot block indefinitely these tax cuts; all it can do is delay them. Those in the gallery should know that last night the Labor Party voted against the government’s tax cuts—voted against giving Australians much needed tax cuts. Despite the concerns of many in their own caucus, despite the advice of many Labor state and territory leaders around the country and despite what the Australian workers want, Labor voted against the tax cuts. The real test will be in the Senate.

The fourth criterion of a good budget is its economic and fiscal responsibility. This budget delivers both in the short term and the long term. In the immediate sense the budget surplus of $8.9 billion allows us to continue to repay Labor’s debt and to keep downward pressure on interest rates. Labor seems to have forgotten the interaction between monetary policy and fiscal policy. This budget allows us to keep downward pressure on interest rates. The second point about the responsibility of this budget is that by continuing to repay debt—and after this next year government debt will be down from the $96 billion we inherited from those on the other side to $6 billion—we will be saving an annual interest payment of $5.7 billion.

When the government came into office, $8½ billion of taxpayers’ money a year was being washed down the drain to service the debt that resulted from the profligacy and
extravagance of the Labor Party. The government has reduced that figure to less than $3 billion. Australian taxpayers are now seeing $5.7 billion a year of their taxes going into essential services instead of servicing Labor’s debt. The final point I would make on fiscal and economic responsibility is that it involves not just the immediate but planning for the future. This budget, by the development of a future fund, will enable the government to do that. No other government has been prepared to put aside funding in this way to prepare for unfunded liabilities down the track. This is fair; it will take pressure off future taxpayers.

I was astonished this morning to hear the member for Hotham say that we stole Labor’s idea, that it was Labor’s idea to have an intergenerational fund. The member for Hotham needs to realise that you cannot save for the future if you are running deficits. How in the world would Labor have funded a future fund when in their last five years in government they ran up nearly $70 billion of debt—five budgets in a row, averaging deficits of nearly $14 billion? How can you save for a future fund when you continue to run up debt? The only thing that a continuation of Labor’s policy would have accumulated for the future was more debt. Instead of providing for the future, they were determined to devour the future by putting an increasing debt burden on our future taxpayers.

Debate (on motion by Mr Hardgrave) adjourned.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Workplace Relations Reform

Mr HOWARD (Bennelong—Prime Minister) (11.41 am)—by leave—For the benefit of the House, I wish to outline the government’s plans for a historic modernisation of Australia’s workplace relations system.

In presenting these measures to the parliament, I place on record my thanks and those of the government for the outstanding work of the Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations, the honourable member for Menzies, whose assiduous work in putting together the components of this package deserve the thanks of the Liberal and National parties and I am sure, as the measures are outlined, the overwhelming majority of the Australian people.

All members will know that the Australian economy has performed very strongly in recent years. Australians have enjoyed higher living standards from a combination of prudent economic management, strong jobs growth, higher real wages, low inflation and interest rates, lower taxes, increased family benefits and improved government services.

While the government is proud of this record, the reality is that Australia must press ahead with economic reform if we are to prosper in the 21st century. We on this side of the House do not believe that the reform tasks coming out of workplace relations have been completed. We have not developed reform fatigue on this side of the House. We do not believe that the lemon has been squeezed dry in industrial relations reform.

As in the past, our future living standards will rely largely on the productivity of our workers and their workplaces. This government trusts the employers and employees of
Australia to make the right decisions in their interests and in the interests of their nation.

The measures I am outlining today represent the next logical step towards a flexible, simple and fair system of workplace relations. Australia must take this step if we are to sustain our prosperity, remain competitive in the global economy and meet future challenges such as the ageing of our society.

The essence of these reforms is to further promote and facilitate the making of agreements at the workplace level. Only through this will the full potential for productivity gains in the Australian economy be realised.

The government’s reform proposals include:

• New arrangements for setting minimum wages and conditions;
• A more streamlined process for the making of workplace agreements, both individual and collective;
• Greater award simplification and a more focused role for the Australian Industrial Relations Commission;
• Major liberalisation of unfair dismissal laws, which have held back job growth in Australia; and, finally
• The goal of a national industrial relations system—one that reflects the competitive national character of the Australian economy in the year 2005.

Australia’s continued prosperity hinges squarely on a flexible and dynamic labour market. It is the single most important determinant of our ability to secure future productivity gains from higher skills, new technology, competition and open trade.

Members will know that in 1996 the government introduced significant reforms to free up Australia’s labour market. These reforms simplified an overly prescriptive award based system and gave Australian employers and employees greater choice in negotiating working conditions. They have helped to sustain productivity growth and higher living standards over the last nine years.

Unfortunately, however, the government was not able to persuade the Senate to go further with reforms that would have truly brought our workplace relations system into the 21st century.

That is why the government is now asking the parliament again to consider a range of workplace relations reforms. This package embodies one of the great pieces of unfinished business in the structural transformation of the Australian economy.

Key principles

These reforms are based on principles that balance freedom and fairness and that have underpinned the Liberal and National parties’ historic contribution to changing the culture of workplace relations in this country. They are principles that I and many others on this side of the House have sought to articulate over the last 20 years.

It is now 20 years since the historic Mudginberri dispute in the Northern Territory, which represented a determined attempt by the employers and employees in that industry, so vital to Australia’s export future, to break free from the shackles of a centralised industrial relations system. It is 19 years since the famous Dollar Sweets case in which my distinguished colleague the Treasurer played such a significant role.

The last 20 years have seen many people advocate change and reform. We have within our grasp the opportunity, in a fair and balanced way, to give effect to further reforms that will consolidate the transformation of the industrial relations culture of this country away from the stultifying effect of the old centralised model.
The government’s aim is to give even greater freedom and flexibility to employers and employees to negotiate at the workplace level.

We want to encourage the further spread of workplace agreements—both collective and individual.

We will provide people with the choice of remaining under the existing award system or entering into workplace agreements.

We ensure that all Australians have the right to join—or not to join—a trade union.

And we preserve the right of workers to have a trade union negotiate in the workplace on their behalf if that is their wish.

**Minimum wages and conditions**

The government remains committed to protecting workers with a fair and sustainable safety net of wages and conditions. A new body—the Australian Fair Pay Commission—will set a single adult minimum wage on a periodic basis. This will be guided by parameters to be set out in the legislation. It will also adjust minimum junior, training and disability wages, award classification wages and casual loadings.

Wage rates contained within awards will also be set by the Australian Fair Pay Commission. Award based classification wages will not fall below the level set after inclusion of any increase determined by the 2005 Safety Net Review, although they will be capable of upwards adjustment by the Fair Pay Commission. Award classification rates will not be reduced nor are we abolishing awards.

Australian workers can therefore be assured that this is not a wage cutting policy.

For the first time, the government will introduce legislative minimum conditions to protect the rights of Australian workers. These conditions will be for annual leave, personal leave, parental leave and a maximum number of ordinary working hours.

Currently workplace agreements are assessed against a test which is unduly complex and which acts as a hindrance to agreement making. For this reason, the government will introduce a new Australian fair pay and conditions standard.

This standard will be based on minimum wages, as set by the Australian Fair Pay Commission, and the guaranteed minimum conditions of employment as set out in the legislation. No worker can have his or her relevant award classification rate lowered.

This new standard will be the test for all agreements. It will make it easier for employers and their employees to compare any agreement against this new safety net of fair pay and conditions.

It will strike a sensible and fair balance between business certainty and safeguarding employee rights. It will provide the basis for continued job growth at a time when Australia must increase participation in the workforce.

**A simplified process for agreement making**

The introduction of workplace agreements has given businesses and workers greater flexibility in negotiating working conditions. But to lock in low unemployment, higher productivity and higher wages, more needs to done to facilitate and streamline agreement making.

Currently the process is long and frustrating to employers and employees, preventing many from agreeing to their own arrangements at the workplace. The Australian Industrial Relations Commission at present must be involved in every collective agreement, even where the parties are in total agreement.
The government is, therefore, determined to make it simpler to bargain at the workplace level. We will deliver a streamlined, simpler and less costly agreement making process so that all collective and individual agreements will now be approved on lodgment with the Office of the Employment Advocate.

Award protection and the role of the Australian Industrial Relations Commission

Since the award simplification process was introduced, progress has been made in reducing the complexity and overly prescriptive nature of awards. However, awards continue to be complex and difficult for workers and their employers to understand.

That is why further award simplification will be undertaken to ensure they provide a modern and simple safety net.

Matters that are already covered by other legislation—including jury service, notice of termination, long service leave and superannuation—should no longer be in awards.

To further reduce complexity and ensure greater focus at the workplace level, a review will be conducted of the existing awards and award classification structures. The purpose of this review will be to rationalise these structures so they are relevant to a dynamic and flexible economy.

The review will be undertaken by a special task group which will be asked to complete its work within 12 months.

The role of the Australian Industrial Relations Commission will change to keep pace with the needs of the modern economy. Australia’s current workplace relations system is still extensively based on an adversarial and outdated view of workplace relations. It is a product of a bygone era of crippling nationwide disputes and a small, inward looking economy.

In the future, the Australian Industrial Relations Commission’s focus will be on its key responsibilities of resolving legitimate disputes and further simplification of awards.

Unfair dismissal laws

In 1993—a bare 12 years ago—the Keating government introduced job destroying, unfair dismissal laws. These laws have held back employment. Rather than protect jobs, they have stopped jobs being created.

The government will, therefore, legislate to exempt businesses with up to 100 employees from the unfair dismissal system. This will generate jobs in small and medium businesses, the engine room of the Australian economy.

In addition, for businesses with more than 100 employees, the probation period for new employees will be increased from three to six months and the relevant rules streamlined.

Workers will continue to be protected from unlawful termination, including dismissal on discriminatory grounds such as race and gender.

The government will also proceed with stalled legislative measures which replace the myriad of complex and conflicting state laws with one system of unfair dismissal.

A national workplace relations system

Australia currently has six different workplace relations systems with thousands of different federal and state awards. This system of overlapping federal and state awards is complex, costly and highly inefficient.

The government believes that a single set of national laws on workplace relations is an idea whose time has come. In an age when our productivity must match that of global competitors, forcing Australian firms to comply with six different workplace relations systems is an anachronism this nation can no longer afford.
The government will work towards a unified national system in a cooperative manner with the states. Our preference is for a single system to be agreed between the Commonwealth and the states—as was the case when the Victorian coalition government referred industrial relations power to the Commonwealth in 1996, a decision that has been reaffirmed by the Bracks Labor government since it came to power.

At the June 2005 Council of Australian Governments meeting, other states will be invited to do what Victoria has done, and refer their powers on workplace relations to the Commonwealth. In the absence of referrals by the states, the government will move towards a national system by relying on the corporations power in the Constitution.

A national system is the next logical step towards a workplace relations system that supports greater freedom, flexibility and individual choice. It is not about empowering Canberra, but liberating workplaces right across the nation.

**Delivering on election commitments**

The government’s program of workplace relations reform includes full implementation of our election commitments. The government will:

- Protect the status of independent contractors and support the right of people to make a choice about their working arrangements;
- Ensure the rule of law is restored to the building and construction industry;
- Restore the exemption for small business from making redundancy payments;
- Establish the Australian Safety and Compensation Council to oversee implementation of national occupational health and safety standards and pursue a national approach to workers’ compensation; and importantly
- Remove barriers to the take up of school-based apprenticeships and part-time apprenticeships.

The government will continue to pursue other stalled legislative measures, as amended to reflect current policy. These include measures to:

- provide stronger laws in relation to industrial action, including secret ballots;
- provide a single right of entry regime; and
- discourage pattern bargaining.

The legislation necessary to put in place the framework for a new workplace relations system will be developed forthwith. The Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations will continue to consult on the detail of the legislation.

**The Chicken Littles**

There will be those who will say that these reforms are unnecessary. Some will argue that they represent an attack on the pay and conditions of the working men and women of Australia.

They will be wrong—just as wrong as those same voices were when they preached doom and gloom about the government’s workplace relations reforms in 1996.

Let me quote just one example of the Chicken Little mantra that was the stock-in-trade of the Australian Labor Party then, and that will doubtless become the barnyard cackle in coming months. Of the Chicken Littles, none was more shrill than that noted rooster, the member for Perth, now Labor’s industrial relations spokesman. In October 1995, he said this:

The Howard model … is all about lower wages; it is about worse conditions; it is about a massive rise in industrial disputation; it is about the abolition of safety nets; and it is about pushing down or abolishing minimum standards.
That was the member for Perth 10 years ago. ‘The sky was going to fall in’, he said.

For the benefit of the House, and more importantly for the benefit of the Australian people, let us examine what actually happened over the last 10 years.

We have seen real wages grow by 14 per cent since March 1996, in contrast with the miserable 1.2 per cent growth over the entire 13 years of the previous Labor government.

We have seen more than 1.6 million new jobs created so that today unemployment is near a 30-year low and more Australians are in work than ever before.

We have seen more Australians choosing the working arrangements that best suit their needs and their family responsibilities.

We have seen a dramatic fall in industrial disputation with the number of working days lost per 1,000 workers at the lowest levels in 90 years.

We have seen a steady growth in the living standards of the lowest paid members of the Australian work force, a point independently underscored by the National Centre for Social and Economic Modelling (NATSEM) when it found that the strongest growth in private incomes over the period from 1994-95 to 2002-03 was enjoyed by low-income households. That is the product of the policies of this government over the last nine years.

So much for Labor’s Chicken Little misinformation and mythology when it comes to workplace relations. They were wrong 10 years ago, they will be wrong again today in their responses to these measures.

Conclusion

Australia needs a workplace system geared to the present and the future, not to the past. Under this government, that system will be one of high productivity, rising real wages, choice and flexibility.

Our society has changed. The world of work has changed. The aspirations of working men and women are high and rising. Our institutional structures must reflect these realities.

A single set of minimum wages, conditions, awards and agreements will provide the long overdue framework to drive future productivity growth, create jobs and increase further the living standards of the working men and women of our nation.

I said at the outset that this government trusts employers and employees to make the right decisions in the workplace.

Mr Speaker, the era of the select few making decisions for the many in the industrial relations system is now over.

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Leader of the House) (12.05 pm)—I present the following document:


and move:

That the House take note of the document.

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

Leave granted.

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Leader of the House) (12.05 pm)—I move:

That so much of the standing and sessional orders be suspended as would prevent Mr Beazley (Leader of the Opposition) speaking for a period not exceeding 24 minutes.

Question agreed to.

Mr BEAZLEY (Brand—Leader of the Opposition) (12.05 pm)—Let us cut through all the spin and verbal camouflage of all of this. What does it mean? It means that families will be worse off. That is what all of this means. What all this amounts to is collapsing the right of ordinary Australians to collectively bargain, making it harder and harder for them and removing from them union pro-
tection where the government can do that, particularly where the work force is at its weakest. It is to gut the processes whereby minimum wages are set—and other awards are built on top of those minimum wages. It is of a piece with the government that, if its own views had been accepted by the IRC on minimum wages, those on our lowest incomes would now be more than $2,000 a year worse off. That is what this is about. It is to deal with the process which has created something the government does not like, underpinning the whole wages system. But that underpins family life in this country; that is what gives it certainty.

Another thing that it is seeking to do is to gut the idea of an independent umpire, something that Australians have striven to have protected in our unique industrial relations system over the course of more than the last century. It is to ensure that that independent umpire cannot act as an umpire over good faith bargaining to make sure that good faith takes place in bargaining, with an independent umpire to adjudicate on that. What its intentions are and whether it succeeds in these intentions will largely depend on the character of the economy at the time, but, above all, its intention is to exercise downward pressure on wages. That is what its intention is. It may not be able to achieve that, because the economy at the time and the lack of skills in the community may, in fact, send wages through the roof at any point in time. But when that situation does not obtain, or if in particular industries it does not obtain, the objective here is to exercise downward pressure on wages.

What all of this adds up to is more uncertainty in family life. What it will add up to is a reasonable confusion and concern in the minds of ordinary Australians as to whether, in their most important endeavour—into which all their creativity, in many cases, goes—in the world of work, they are going to have the level of protection they are used to and whether they are going to have the capacity they now have to look their boss in the eye and be unafraid when questions are discussed about the lifestyle and the conditions that ordinary Australian workers confront. This is about a material undermining of democracy, as it is about a material undermining of people’s capacity to enjoy a decent and improving life.

Let us ask ourselves a question: why is the Prime Minister trying to stamp his 1970s ideology on the 2005 Australian economy? We need to look forward. Why is the Prime Minister now adding so much complexity to the system? Do not make any mistakes here; this is a more complex system, not a less complex system, that is being put in place. We need an industrial relations system that is flexible and fair, not complex and unfair. We need to help Australians become the most skilled workers in the world. We need infrastructure to lay the platform for long and sustained productivity, and we need to distinguish between economic fact and Liberal Party ideology.

Australia’s industrial relations systems have changed and they have improved. As painful as it is to those opposite, trade unions have participated in making our country prosperous. They have done it in partnership with governments and business. Productivity has improved over time, just as industrial disputation has declined over time. So why then, in the face of these facts, do we have a government talking 1970s rhetoric, providing an analysis of the industrial relations scene as though it were what it was in 1976?

These proposals reek of a government intoxicated by a mix of absolute power—and they will enjoy that on 1 July—and crude outdated ideology. What is so concerning about the latest Howard-Costello proposal is that it fundamentally undermines good faith
between workers and employers. That is just simply not the way to move forward and that is not how we improve productivity. The Prime Minister—and this is very important to understand, because he has had opportunities to express himself on this in the past and he had an opportunity to do so here again today—refuses to guarantee that as a result of his legislation no worker will be worse off. He refuses to guarantee that, because he is determined to slash the wages of the lowest paid workers. He is out to reduce their conditions and he is getting rid of the independent umpire.

He forgets, as he presents his 1976 analysis, that it was Labor that introduced enterprise bargaining and Labor that made it work. It was Labor that brought flexibility with fairness. It was Labor who took up the challenge of labour market reforms, integrating Australia into the world economy, phasing out protectionism, creating a modern, productivity based system of workplace agreements and scaling back regulation. It was not him. This was not the situation Labor inherited when we came into office in 1983; it is what we did. What that did was to set the groundwork for Australian prosperity now and to set the groundwork for improved productivity in our labour force. We did that. We did it with the changes we put in place, and you have benefited from them. You have benefited from the fact that it always takes a decade or so to put those things into position. On some of them you supported us; on many of them you opposed us. But we nevertheless did it, and since then you have been the beneficiary of it. You have been the beneficiary of that and the most beneficial terms of trade that this country has enjoyed in the best part of a century—extraordinary terms of trade—are what have driven the wages picture now.

But there is a problem in the wages picture now. It is in the productivity that we saw surge off the Labor Party’s reforms, the productivity that was a product of the flexibility in the workplace and the fact that individual employers had the opportunity to sit down with their own work forces, relatively free of external influences, and settle issues with their employees in a way that suited their workplaces. This was put in place by your predecessors. That was what drove productivity, but it is driving it no longer. It is driving it no longer, not because of a lack of flexibility; the problem we now confront is the problem of innovation generally, the lack of investment in innovation in Australian business and Australian firms, which has slowed dramatically under this government. That is the first point. The second point is a huge problem of skills in this country, a desperate problem of skills that we must now begin to deal with if we are going to restore the levels of growth in productivity that we got from the Labor Party’s reforms, which have been slowing dramatically over the last three years.

Through this government’s refusal to do the hard work of reform, the productivity surge, as I have said, has faltered. The government refuses to do the hard things and, instead, makes it harder for Australians and their families by cutting their wages, downgrading their conditions, removing safety nets and sacking the independent umpire. Instead of investing in training Australians, it is importing from overseas an extra 20,000 workers just this year, and it is turning away 40,000 Australians from TAFE colleges every year.

For Labor, a cooperative and progressive industrial relations system is a core value. Creativity, dignity and self-worth are culti-
vated in the world of work, in workplaces where employees are confident and secure and where wages and conditions are fairly negotiated and not stripped away.

But let us get down to it. At his core, the Prime Minister believes there is no legitimate role for trade unions in the economic and social affairs of our nation. When he, with his backbench, looks at trade union members, he sees not his fellow Australians but an enemy to be defeated. When we look at the trade union movement in this country, we see men and women who take responsibility in the workplace, who take risks with their futures on behalf of their colleagues, who believe that their fellow man and woman is bettered by their willingness to take on responsibility. I am not simply talking about full-time officials here; I am talking about shop stewards and job delegates, because the union movement is spread throughout the workplaces and not simply commanded from a centre in Melbourne or in any of the particular state branch offices.

It is a movement that concerns a huge array of Australians. These are not alien Australians. These are Australians who, in their voluntary life in this community, accept on that voluntary basis responsibility for their fellow Australians. They are our brothers and sisters. They are our mums and dads. They are our aunts and uncles. They are not an alien force or an enemy, although they are treated like that by our opponents. These people take responsibility not only in the workplace but in society as a whole. Go to any organised work force anywhere in this country and you will find the people who run Little Athletics, the volunteer fire brigades and the volunteer components of the SES. You will find the people who run the local footy clubs, who collect for the Salvation Army and who are the sidesmen in the churches of this land. They are the people you are taking on here today with the legislation that you are putting forward.

You sit there, cackling in your cocky manner. In the comments you made, you spoke of Chicken Little. I will tell you what: there is only one barnyard animal in this House at the moment, and that is the cocky fellow opposite who presented the statement he did about half an hour ago—that cocky fellow who now finds himself with absolute power; that cocky fellow full of hubris, with the capacity to slither through the Australian political system to put in place the prejudices that he has had for 40 or 50 years and that he has brought to Australian politics, and with a mind-set that still lives with a picture of the world that in the mid-1970s may have had some truth to it but now has no truth to it at all. This is a person who simply cannot see what technological innovation and skills mean and how crucial they are now to productivity—who, in the face of all obvious evidence to the contrary, still sees the workplace in the same shape and form it had when he first began to form his prejudices. It is a terrible thing when any one of us cannot free ourselves from prejudice and see reality. It is a truly horrible thing when the person concerned happens to be a Prime Minister and has, as this Prime Minister will have from 1 July, absolute power.

The government in this federal parliament—and this is the nub of it—will not give a guarantee to those Australians I have described: those men and women in the work force who organise for the trade unions and who are their beneficiaries. It will not give a guarantee to them or to those on whose behalf they work that they will not be worse off. It has been asked directly to give that guarantee. It has dodged the question and so exposed the true motive here.

In our democracy, the minimum wage is one of the basic protections that Australian
families have. It should be mentioned in the same breath as the right to vote or the right to assemble. Let it be known that, if the minimum wage were undermined, Australia would cease to be a family-friendly country. It is un-Australian to expect parents who are already at the lower end of the wage scale to look for more work when they should be at the dinner table, taking the kids to their sports or helping them with their homework. If individual contracts mean that working hours can be routinely varied at the drop of a hat, then who suffers? It is families that suffer. Make no mistake: this foreshadowed legislation is very bad for Australian families. If one of our community’s social objectives is to have parents spending more time with their families, then these proposals fail the families test. That is why they are so un-Australian.

The government says, ‘Forget about what the country needs,’ because this is not about that. This is about the fulfilment of a lifelong ambition to attack and control the industrial relations system in this country—and that has been exposed here today. With unfettered power in the Senate, there is no holding the Prime Minister back—and he will succeed this time, where Peter Reith with his balaclavas and alsatians on the waterfront failed. Let us make absolutely no mistake about what the government’s intentions are in this regard. A veil has been drawn over that particular episode but, if you were to strip it away, you would find conspiracies in the Prime Minister’s office between himself and Reith to deny Australian workers what they said their legislation guaranteed—and that was the right of Australian workers, if they so chose, to be collectively represented by a union.

This Prime Minister and his then industrial relations minister, Peter Reith, actively conspired against the capacity, in this case on the waterfront, of workers to organise themselves into the union that they wanted to be in. They made a decision to make that a criterion to lose your job. They attempted to enforce it with thug guards and with dogs. That is what they wanted to do, and it represented their true passion. To turn on your fellow Australians like that and treat them in that way required an image of your fellow Australians that essentially demonised them and made them something other than real people, something other than the mums and dads I have been talking about, the people who really build this country.

We in the Labor Party will never fight a class war like that, because we do not believe in it. We do not believe in class war; they do. We believe in cooperative, flexible labour relations. We do not believe in tilting balances against ordinary folk in that process. We believe in independent umpires presiding over a good faith system, an environment in which class war is taken out of industrial relations. But you remove all of that. You gut the independent umpire. You remove the capacity for people to get themselves a decent minimum wage. You bureaucratise that process and render it essentially unfair. That is what you propose to do. You introduce into Australia an element of latent class war that we do not want, that is against the Australian spirit of the fair go and against the Australian spirit of equality.

There will be no brake on their political excesses or their ideological obsessions. I want people to understand the consequences of that. We are not dealing, when we deal with this Prime Minister, with a fool. We may be dealing with a cocky man, but we are not dealing with a fool. When you read the Prime Minister’s words, you need to read between the lines, as well as the lines themselves, to get an understanding of what is intended. He has tried the process of crash and crash through. He did that on the waterfront and he was actually repelled. This is

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not about crash or crash through; this is about subtle undermining. Undermine the state systems first and undermine a set of conditions. Get long service leave out of it, get jury service out of it and review the rest of it. Then introduce another piece of legislation, while you have still got those numbers in the Senate to be able to do it, that takes this back a point further.

What we are seeing is the Australian democracy and industrial conditions as a salami to be sliced away—not to be thrown away but sliced away. This Prime Minister has his intentions absolutely clear. His heart is always on his sleeve on industrial relations. But he does not necessarily have every element of the meaning of those intentions and directions clear in any particular piece of legislation that he hands you. He can exercise that patience because he will have absolute control of the Senate for 2½ years. There will be plenty of time, after the first elements of this are through, to start on the other elements. There will be no brake on their political excesses or their ideological obsessions. Just think about the consequences for this country when the union movement is finally gutted as an operation.

Mr Hardgrave—The workers have walked away.

Mr BEAZLEY—That is very interesting. Let me continue, having got his interjection onto the parliamentary record. Where would the asbestos victims, for example, of James Hardie be without the trade union movement and that campaign run by the ACTU? It is about more than just the wages that people pocket and the hours they work. That is important, but the fact of the matter is that the ability of our workforce to see themselves collectively organised and represented goes way beyond what goes into their back pockets. It goes to their very lives. The capacity that they have for family-friendly hours is part of it, but the capacity to survive at all is part of it—the capacity to have in the workplace people courageous enough to stand up to the boss and say: ‘Listen, mate, we’ve got a real problem here. It’s a problem which is going to affect our ability to live a full and happy life. We’re going to experience, as a consequence of this or that productive process, a real threat from disease.’ That is not necessarily easily seen from the workplace or elsewhere; but we can see, when we look at the consequences and the epidemiology of somebody suffering, that the problem has occurred.

Who will stand up and fight for them? Not the Liberal Party. Not the individual Liberal members. Not the scions of privilege in this place. Not the spin doctors and the pollsters that they have out there, who confuse people’s minds about what their true intentions are. It will be some honest soul out there—some ordinary fellow or woman, some ordinary person—who stands up, bells the cat on this and says, ‘We’ve got to get together to make sure that this changes.’ They need an organisation, they need an operation, that effectively does that, because any 10 sitting together will not necessarily have that effect. They need a powerful organisation, such as that which is provided by the trade union movement, in order to achieve that outcome.

The Prime Minister’s industrial relations attack is not about reform. It is not about the long-term interests of the Australian economy or its people. He says we suffer reform fatigue—we do not. We just understand what reform is now needed. The reform that is now needed goes to the skills of our workforce, and it goes to national leadership on removing the bottlenecks which have developed in our infrastructure. We are going to work like blazes on all of that. What we are not going to do is dignify your prejudices reform. We are not going to see a dream where dignity is awarded to a few but paid
for by the many. We are not going to allow you, because you think you can get away with anything now that you are about to take control of the Senate, to do so without us standing up and fighting you. We are not going to let you turn back the clock. What we stand for is rebuilding in this country. We are not going to cop the Prime Minister’s paragraph from Billy McMahon’s autocue on all of this. We are going to make absolutely certain that he pays the penalty for what it is that he is trying to do now to the Australian people. (Time expired)

Debate (on motion by Mr Andrews) adjourned.

AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF MARINE SCIENCE AMENDMENT BILL 2005
SOCIAL SECURITY LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (ONE-OFF PAYMENTS FOR CARERS) BILL 2005
HIGHER EDUCATION LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (2005 MEASURES NO. 1) BILL 2005

Assent

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

APPROPRIATION BILL (NO. 1) 2005-2006

Cognate bills:

APPROPRIATION BILL (NO. 2) 2005-2006

APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENTARY DEPARTMENTS) BILL (NO. 1) 2005-2006

APPROPRIATION BILL (NO. 5) 2004-2005

APPROPRIATION BILL (NO. 6) 2004-2005

Second Reading

Debate resumed.
Similarly, I noted that Peter Corish of the National Farmers Federation had a letter published in the Australian this week saying that farmers had done everything possible to prepare for the drought. Farmers may have done their best, but the National Farmers Federation has not. Instead of urging the Howard government to take action on global warming, the Farmers Federation has in fact opposed measures such as the Kyoto protocol on climate change. If our farmers are to have any prospect of better times ahead instead of ever more frequent and severe droughts they need concerted international action to contain the carbon dioxide build-up, which is causing global warming.

The Farmers Federation and the Howard government are serving farmers poorly in this matter. It is no good claiming, as Mr Corish did in his letter, that this was ‘not a normal drought’ but ‘an unprecedented drought’. This is exactly what the CSIRO and the Bureau of Meteorology have been predicting. How many droughts is it going to take till the Howard government and the Farmers Federation start campaigning for international action to contain the carbon dioxide build-up, which is causing global warming?

I visited Goulburn with Senator Ursula Stephens and Senator Kerry O’Brien recently to see first-hand the impact of drought and to talk about the risk that Goulburn will utterly run out of water by the end of this year. This certainly brought home to me and it ought to bring home to all members of parliament and people in Australia that this is a matter of urgency. The Howard government needs to stop trying to scuttle and undermine international efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. It should support measures such as the Kyoto protocol on climate change, emissions trading and renewable energy. Unless and until it gets serious about global warming, it is condemning our farmers to the spectre of rolling droughts and a climate and landscape which is no longer suitable for agriculture as we used to know it.

The second issue I want to talk about in this debate is the issue of taxation, which has been the subject of post-budget discussion. We had a debate on this gagged last night, which was a pity because I would have liked to have gone into this in more detail. It needs to be understood that this is the highest taxing government and the highest taxing Treasurer in Australia’s history, with total tax now at almost $235 billion in 2005-06. This is an increase of over 70 per cent since this government came to office. The Treasurer collects $100 billion more in tax revenue per year than was collected back in 1996 and the average Australian family is paying $12,000 more in taxes under this Treasurer than they were paying nine years ago.

The GST is weighing very heavily on Australian families. By 2008-09 the GST bill per household will be almost $5,400—over $100 per week. It is not just the GST that this government has imposed on working Australians. In fact, since the GST was introduced in 2000, there have been at least 62 new taxes and charges introduced. These have been a positive cash cow for the government while being a serious burden on all Australians. The fiscal discipline of this government—the thing that the government crows about frequently—is built on the backs of ordinary Australians.

I particularly want to refer to the issue of fuel tax. Since the introduction of the GST the government’s total petrol tax take has continued to rise. Back in 2000-01 the total petrol tax take was $8.38 billion. For 2004-
05 it is estimated that it will be $9.32 billion, an increase of nearly $1 billion. By 30 June the government will have collected an estimated $44 billion in petrol taxes since the GST came in—$36 billion in excise and $8 billion from the GST. Had the government stuck with the pre-GST petrol tax arrangements it would have collected $3.31 billion less—in other words, less than $41 billion—in that time. So even allowing for the 1.5c per litre cut in March 2001, and for revenue forgone as a result of the non-indexation of petrol excise, this government is $3 billion better off from petrol taxes since the introduction of the GST. Despite the Prime Minister’s petrol tax backflip after the Ryan by-election in 2001—that 1.5c cut in petrol excise and an end to petrol excise indexation—he has still managed to trouser an extra $3.3 billion from Australian motorists over the past five years as a result of bringing in the GST on petrol.

Much of that windfall has come about as a result of increasing world petrol prices, which in turn has arisen as a result of the military adventurism in Iraq that the Howard government have so vehemently supported. Not only have they profited from their own mistakes by way of increased petrol tax revenue but there has been speculation that higher petrol prices have saved the government the political embarrassment of higher interest rates. So the government are reaping the money and offering peanuts back to hardworking Australians in the form of tax cuts. They are not even managing to return the bracket creep.

The third thing I want to do in this debate, which I appreciate is a bit unusual, is pay tribute to the life and work of James Murray Gavin, who passed away yesterday. Murray Gavin was a councillor for the City of Coburg for three decades—the 1960s, the 1970s and the 1980s—and mayor on a record four occasions. I have been very fortunate to learn from strong, wise and politically passionate elders of the Labor tribe. I saw a lot of Bob Hawke in action. I worked for Gareth Evans. I learnt a lot from David White in state parliament. But the man I learnt most from, my political mentor, was Murray Gavin.

There were times in the eighties when it felt like I had two fathers: my own father—strong, wise and always there for me; and Murray, my political father. He was relentless. I remember reading that during the Second World War there was a set of planes from one allied country bombing Germany by day and another set of planes from a different allied country bombing Germany by night. At some stages Murray and I had something like that going. He would be looking after Coburg by day and I would come home from my day job in the city and get to all the meetings at night.

Murray gravitated to positions of influence. He was the chair of the Coburg council caucus. The meetings were on Sunday mornings at 9.30—not 9.31 or 9.32. He enforced punctuality by simply starting the meeting whether councillors were there or not. It worked brilliantly, I can tell you. The meetings were mostly held at the town hall or sometimes at Murray’s home in Pleasant Street. I liked those meetings. The sun would stream in through the big windows out the back and his wife, Amy—the hostess with the mostest—would bring us cups of coffee and cake and biscuits.

Murray and another long-serving Coburg councillor, Frank Cox, were a team. When they agreed about something, it was time for the rest of us—and time for the city—to brace ourselves because it was going to happen. When they disagreed, the rest of us got more of a look in. One thing Murray disagreed with Frank about was Frank’s plan to concrete part of Edgar’s Creek, a tributary of
the Merri Creek. Frank went on at one caucus meeting about how the water of the creek was smelly and residents should not have to put up with it. Murray had seen him coming, though. At the end of the debate, Murray reached under the table and produced a bottle of water that he had taken from Edgar's Creek, triumphantly pointing out that no-one had smelt anything untoward during the meeting. I think we won the battle that day, but Frank was a very determined character and won the war by bringing the Edgar's Creek issue up several times until he eventually got the numbers. It was a reminder to me that one of the problems with environmental issues is that you can win a battle 10 times but, if you lose it once, you have lost it forever.

Murray was a man of action. There was a raging public argument in the early seventies about whether the council or the board of works was responsible for draining and cleaning up Coburg Lake. So one night, in the dead of night, Murray went down and pulled out what he told me was a large plug, thereby ending the argument. Only a handful of people knew it was him, and there was quite a lot of public tut-tutting and head-shaking about this vandalism.

Another time, after a mayoral ball—and, I confess, a few drinks—I removed the portrait of the Queen from the main town hall. But it was Murray who put me up to it, both figuratively and literally. The Irishman in him did not think much of the Queen and he both suggested to me, as an impressionable young man, that I do it and gave me a bunk up so I could reach it. We hid the portrait in a dusty, tiny broom closet in a disused part of the town hall and wondered how long it would take the council staff to notice it was gone and whether they would ever find it. We underrated them. They noticed it was gone on Monday morning and found it within 24 hours.

Another position of influence that Murray gravitated to was returning officer of the Wills branch of the Labor Party. Our rules for the election of delegates to state conference, involving proportional representation and votes with a transfer value measured in the thousandths, are an absolute nightmare. Murray was just about the only person who understood them. Every year or two we would spend Sunday afternoon and Sunday night sometimes helping, but mostly watching in awe, as he painstakingly went through the count.

As returning officer, Murray also ruled on the issue of voter eligibility. Back in the late seventies and early eighties he had to deal with some of the kinds of allegations of irregularities which are now again achieving a certain amount of media interest. One time we protested about the eligibility of a couple of members of a new branch, the Moreland branch. Murray ruled them in but subsequently undertook such a detailed inquiry about these branch members that he ended up laying over 20 charges of irregularities and the branch was closed down.

There was another guy who Murray believed lived outside the electorate. Murray took to ringing him up at his home in Reservoir or somewhere like that in the early hours of the morning and telling him, ‘See, I know where you live.’ This man and his supporters were unfazed, telling Murray that he should stop prying into this man’s love life. It is surprisingly hard to prove that someone does not live at a particular address. Nevertheless, I loved being on Murray’s side. Believe me, it was the only place to be.

My favourite picture of Murray as a man of action was of him going down to the Merri Creek north of the Bakers Road bridge in full mayoral robes, with a police escort, and personally using bolt cutters to knock down a fence which the resident abutting the
creek had erected to stop people getting through. Nowadays there is a path all the way from Coburg Lake to the ring road. Back then, there was nothing, and some residents had blocked off public access to the creek at various points. So Murray, after painstakingly researching the legal position, took the police and the press and the bolt cutters down to one of the offending properties and made clear who was boss.

Maybe his finest hours came after the Hawke Labor government was elected in 1983, when he was able to use his political connections at local, state and federal levels to secure all sorts of facilities and services for Coburg. One thing he did during this period was to market a bottle of port from All Saints under the label ‘Bob Hawke port’. It was incredibly successful, even though a lot of people from around Australia over the years have told me they did not think it tasted too good. It was so successful that it skewed the company’s production operation. One day Murray invited me to All Saints cellars in North Melbourne and—dead set—about half the bottles in the warehouse were Bob Hawke port. And Murray, who to the best of my knowledge was never employed by All Saints, was walking around the warehouse giving instructions as if he owned the joint.

Like all good political operators, Murray would occasionally surprise you by forming new alliances. I joined the Labor Party less than 20 years after the split, and many of its members felt such raw emotion and hatred towards the DLP that it coloured their judgment and sometimes caused them to make mistakes. But Murray struck up a friendship with Peter O’Reilly, who was a key organiser for the DLP and anti-Labor forces in Coburg and beyond. I know about the deal that they cut over the Coburg Community Health Centre, but I have no doubt that they cut other deals that none of us ever knew about.

Murray was a leader of men, and I mean men. He was not all that comfortable with the women councillors, either ours or theirs. He came from a different time, when he and many of the other councillors had at home supportive wives and mothers who were not without influence but in a behind-the-scenes way rather than in the up-front way we see today. He was, however, a pioneer in bringing people from non-English-speaking background communities into civic life. Nowadays our councillors rejoice in names like El-Halabi, Kariofyliidis and Caputo, but back then any candidates for council with Italian or Greek names, whether Labor or Independent, were likely to get a flogging. But Murray reached out to the Italian community in particular, conscious of both their rights and their political significance. Drawing on his own part-Italian heritage, he set up the senior citizens centres et cetera and helped pave the way for the civic flowering of the culturally diverse community that postwar Coburg and Pascoe Vale had become.

One of the many things about Murray that amazed me was the way he took to computers like a duck to water. He got so good at using them that, many years after he had retired from a working lifetime at Australia Post, he could be seen catching the train at Pascoe Vale station to go to a city job he had scored involving computer programming. After I became the member for Pascoe Vale in the Victorian parliament, I would go round to his place once a month and dictate my monthly newsletter, the Pascoe Vale Matters. Murray would not only type it up on the spot but he would do all the layout and graphics. I was not terribly keen to learn all this newfangled computer stuff—I’m still not—but Murray was right in to it.

Murray did not want to grow old and die. I know you’re thinking: ‘That’s not a very big point. Show me someone who does.’ But Murray really did not want to grow old and
die. He hated ill health, and he loved life too much. He just loved it. He threw himself into it. He did not sit on the sidelines complaining or envying someone else or wishing things were different. He just threw himself into it and had a ball. He had a stroke a few years ago that was cruel and unfair. He was terribly frustrated by it. He did not want people to see him, a proud man, struck down and incapacitated. He kept up things like his interest in history. When I saw him at the end of January, he had listened to many hours of audio books on the history of Brunswick. Nevertheless, that stroke was such a cruel blow and it made things very hard for his wife, Amy. I hope for her sake that things get a bit easier now.

I do not say this in order to diminish the important contribution that other councillors or council officers made or that the council has continued to make since that time, but every last person in the Coburg and Pascoe Vale communities—and many of them nowadays will not have heard of Murray Gavin—when they get up in the morning and walk down a footpath, drive down a street, cycle down a path, walk the dog through a park, take their mum to the senior citizens centre or visit the library, a swimming pool or the Community Health Centre should say a little thank you to Murray Gavin. He was the rock around which the city revolved. He made it all sing and hum and happen. He was a towering figure in the city of Coburg. He was a leader of men. The city of Coburg was incredibly privileged to have him, and I doubt that we will see someone like him in our part of the world again in our lifetimes.

Mr McARTHUR (Corangamite) (12.51 pm)—I am delighted to participate in this budget debate for May 2005 on Appropriation Bill (No. 1) 2005-2006 and associated bills. In my opening remarks I will provide a snapshot of the Australian economy as it stands in this current year. The Australian economy, by any measure, is buoyant and prosperous, and average Australians are enjoying conditions they have not enjoyed in most of their lifetimes. The background to this current prosperity is the change in industrial relations brought in by the Howard government in 1996 and a change of attitude toward productivity, industrial relations and matters surrounding the work force. The reductions in tariffs, particularly in the car industry in Geelong and in Melbourne in the TCF industry, have meant that those industries have become more competitive and have not caused difficulty to other industries.

Australia has been a market economy. Both sides of the parliament agree that the private sector should be the engine of the economy and that competition policy is a good thing in that it ensures that monopolies of state governments and instrumentalities are in a competitive price position. Government debt has come down from horrific levels of $96 billion under the Keating government to $6 billion and will be down to negligible levels next year. Interest rates are down from the very high rates of 23 per cent—as you would well recall, Mr Deputy Speaker—to 5.5 per cent. As tax cuts have been very much a part of the Howard government individual Australians are paying less tax and will pay less tax after this budget. Capital gains tax rates have changed and the whole tax regime has been reformed—with more to come.

Commodity prices overseas have improved the Australian economy remarkably and there is some doubt whether they will continue. I sympathise with rural Australians, particularly in New South Wales and Queensland, who have been facing drought for up to seven years, with very little relief in sight. The future fund, which I will refer to in a moment, is a major approach by this government to solve the problems of the future and the sins of previous governments who
Productivity has improved in Australia because of the Howard government’s waterfront reform agenda. As was mentioned by the Leader of the Opposition, these changes have made a dramatic difference to the moving of containers on the waterfront. Standard of living has improved and, as the Prime Minister said in his speech earlier in this House, in the last nine years real wages grew by 14 per cent in contrast with the 1.2 per cent growth over the 13 years of Labor administration. The share market stands at 4,000 points, an indication of the prosperity of the superannuation funds and the prosperity of individual Australians. Inflation has been held at two to three per cent, remarkable when compared with previous federal governments.

The dark clouds are the current account deficit, which is running at between 5.5 to 6.5 per cent of GDP—that matter should be addressed, and obviously needs more prosperous times; that is a problem, as Australian consumers continue to buy goods overseas—and household debt, with Bankcard and household debt backed up by the value of people’s houses. That is something that needs to be serviced. As I mentioned, commodity prices are a problem in that any drop will be reflected in the whole of the Australian community.

I will acknowledge some of the more positive activities of the Hawke-Keating government. The Hawke-Keating government floated the dollar in 1983 which meant that the Australian economy, for the first time, was subjected to international pressures. No longer were we insulated from the world in wages, commodities or monetary fluctuations. I compliment Senator Button, who was instrumental in bringing tariffs down—with support from the opposition at that time. The tax rate was brought down from 61c to 47c and dividends were franked. I acknowledge that that is the positive side of the Hawke-Keating government. On the other hand, they were big spenders. They had a $96 billion debt and tried to buy votes in the Australian community. Over the long term that does not work out.

I will raise a couple of other matters before speaking on the budget. The GST—another major reform of this government—which we debated at the 1998 and 2001 elections, was a windfall for the states. It was predicted that the GST would amount to about $27 billion to $28 billion. The states now receive $37 billion, yet they have had the gall not to reduce some of the smaller taxes. They have enjoyed a growth tax for the first time in their economic lives, yet they will not remove the other taxes. The states always blame the federal government for infrastructure, health and roads problems, yet they receive this river of gold in GST revenue.

The Treasurer’s budget has the fundamentals correct. The budget is in surplus, economic growth is on line, inflation is under control and there are no difficult issues to overcome. The tough issue that has been addressed in this budget is the removal of the super surcharge. Nobody agreed with that. The problem was that revenue needed to be found to overcome the excesses of the Keating government. This difficult tax has now been removed totally, costing the Treasurer $2 billion. Tariffs of three per cent have been removed on imported goods—another tough issue costing the government considerable money. The ageing population problems have been looked at, the budget is in surplus and the debt has been reduced.

The key point about the budget is that some of the future problems have been looked at and addressed. There is never any
free lunch in a federal budget, but there are no votes in a couple of those issues because they are problems for the future—the aged, the removal of the superannuation surcharge and the future fund. This government and the Treasurer, in particular, have done a fantastic job in ensuring that the budget addresses these issues and the long-term needs of Australia. Key features are tax cuts; the welfare to work proposition; the surplus of $8.9 billion; preparation for the ageing population, which will double in the next 40 years; the unemployment rate being down to a record 28-year low of 5.1 per cent; and government debt being down to negligible levels of $6 billion.

Let us look at government debt in other countries: Canada, 22 per cent of GDP; OECD, 50 per cent; New Zealand, two per cent; Japan, a horrific 90 per cent; and the USA, 45 per cent. This means that this government and Australia can withstand some of the difficulties in the future with commodity prices, oil, interest rates and so on. I again compliment Minister Macfarlane and the Treasurer on the very low tariff regime. Tariffs were costing the government $1.3 billion and it would have been easier to leave them there, but it was always important, both philosophically and from the point of view of business, to remove them.

The Labor Party stand for high taxes. They have been advocating a tax cut at the lower level, but they are fundamentally for bigger taxes, bigger debts and bigger spending. The Victorian Labor government went broke—there is absolutely no doubt about that. The Howard butlers are seeking the tax relief of the current government.

Ms Macklin—Stewie, are you giving them your $65?

The DEPUTY SPEAKER—The member will be heard in silence.

Mr McARTHUR—I am more than delighted to handle the member for Jagajaga’s interjection. Labor went broke in Victoria. There is no doubt about that and absolutely any suggestion that the Cain-Kirner government were able to pay their debts is unbelievable. The Keating government were not far away from them with a $96 billion debt. You do incite me to a bit of excitement here on this major issue of state governments who spend when they do not have the money, and the shadow minister opposite encourages that type of view.

Ms Macklin—Stewie, are you giving them your $65?

The DEPUTY SPEAKER—Order! The member for Jagajaga has been advised that the member will be heard in silence.

Mr McARTHUR—This Treasurer’s 10th budget is the best that I have seen here in 21 years, and I have seen a lot of budgets. I have seen them delivered by Treasurer Keating, who said he brought home the bacon. He brought home the bacon all right—at 23 per cent!

Ms Macklin—But, Stewie, are you giving them your $65?

The DEPUTY SPEAKER—Order! I put the proposition to the member for Jagajaga that, if she wishes to make her speech next, she will observe standing order 65(b). The member deserves to be heard in silence.

Mr McARTHUR—In terms of a review of the current position which I have alluded to, the industrial relations reform plan which the Prime Minister has put before parliament this day is a very historic document which I personally am very supportive of, having started these reforms in opposition in 1985. Unemployment is the lowest for 27 years. World commodity prices have helped the current prosperity and the mining sector have invested some $20 billion in the last two years to encourage their productivity. Gov-
ernment debt has been reduced, and as the OECD report said:

Because of buoyant budget revenues, government finances are expected to remain in surplus, which should eliminate government debt in 2006.

I will now talk about tax cuts and I will quote the independent advice of the OECD. Tax cuts are required to provide incentive for workers and to reduce the impact of bracket creep. The OECD said:

The priority for tax reform should be the simultaneous continuation of policies which contribute to the lowering of these high effective marginal tax rates, and the raising of the threshold at which the maximum marginal income tax rates cut in.

As outlined in the OECD report, high tax in Australia is likely to influence the outflow of intellectual and skilled capital to lower taxing Asian countries—and of course to the United States, which attracts those finance workers to the markets of New York because of the tax regime in that country. Mr Deputy Speaker, I seek leave to present and also incorporate in *Hansard* a table which talks about the effects of bracket creep. I have spoken about this with the minister at the table and the opposition spokesman who was at the table before.

Leave granted.

*The document read as follows*—

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Average Weekly Earnings ($)</th>
<th>Average Yearly Earnings ($)</th>
<th>Top Tax Threshold p.a. ($)</th>
<th>Top Threshold as Multiple of AEE</th>
<th>Top Marginal Tax rate %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>June 1975</td>
<td>148.20</td>
<td>7,706.40</td>
<td>40,000 +</td>
<td>5.19</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>382.90</td>
<td>19,910.80</td>
<td>35,788 +</td>
<td>1.79</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 1995</td>
<td>647.00</td>
<td>33,644.00</td>
<td>50,000 +</td>
<td>1.48</td>
<td>47</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 2005</td>
<td>993.10</td>
<td>51,641.00</td>
<td>70,000 +</td>
<td>1.35</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 July 2005</td>
<td>993.10*</td>
<td>51,641.00</td>
<td>80,000 +</td>
<td>1.55</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 June 2006</td>
<td>993.10*</td>
<td>51,641.00</td>
<td>95,000 +</td>
<td>1.84</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Mr McARTHUR**—We see from this table that bracket creep over the past decade has produced rapidly increasing proportions of taxpayers entering the top tax bracket. In 1975 the top taxpayer was on 5.19 times weekly average earnings to reach the top bracket. That is not so long ago; 1975 was the time when Gough Whitlam went out and Malcolm Fraser became Prime Minister. By 2006 it would be only 1.8 times weekly earnings to reach the top bracket. I think that demonstrates the point quite clearly that, if we do not move the thresholds, bracket creep becomes a major problem to the Howard battlers in that middle-income and higher tax bracket.

The Treasury’s 1985 white paper on tax reform noted the effects of bracket creep. They said that in 1954-55 the marginal tax rate on average earnings was 19 per cent. By 1984-85 it was 46 per cent. In 1954-55 one per cent of full-time employees faced a marginal tax rate of 46 per cent. By 1984-85 this figure was 39 per cent. In 1954-55 the top marginal rate was 67 per cent. It cut in at 18 times average weekly earnings. That is the figure I recall. I emphasise to members of this House that an escalating tax rate was okay back in the 1950s but as wages have moved on, average weekly wage earners are moving into the higher tax brackets. Tax office figures also support the tax bracket creep theory, with the top quartile of taxpayers
paying an increasing amount of total tax. The top quartile paid 64 per cent of their personal income tax in 2002-03, which was up from 61 per cent. So in fact the top taxpayers have been paying more tax. The next quartile down paid 21 per cent, down from 24 per cent. The third quartile paid 11.3 per cent, down from 11.7 per cent. The very bottom quartile paid 3.1 per cent, down from 3.5 per cent. So you see a situation in those figures where the top bracket are moving into the bracket creep position and are paying more tax. This government has moved to alleviate that problem for those Howard battlers. They are the ones who are working and they are taking the risks. So this top quartile have paid the bulk of income tax as the rates have increased.

In the 2005-06 budget tax reforms only three per cent of taxpayers will fall within the top marginal rate from 1 July 2006. I emphasise that because we have moved the threshold. This is in contrast to the staggering 12 per cent who fall into the top marginal tax rate at this moment. Three per cent of taxpayers is still higher than the 1.3 per cent who were on the top rate in 1980-81. So the figures clearly indicate that bracket creep is an insidious, inexorable move for all taxpayers. Those taxpayers, the ones that the Leader of the Opposition and the shadow spokesman at the table talk about, will inevitably over time, with a smaller amount of inflation, move into the higher tax brackets. Changes to the top tax rate are long overdue and are ably justified by the OECD in their latest report in what they have said about generally increasing the tax thresholds. This has been well received by commentators and by the wage earners themselves, yet the Labor Party want to vote against the tax cuts and the change in thresholds. As Allesandra Fabro has written in the Australian Financial Review, these changes:

... will put Australia’s top bracket at closer to three times average earnings, and this puts Australia close to the international average.

Many researchers and scholars argue strongly for tax reforms, including lowering effective marginal tax rates. There are a number of arguments for creating greater efficiency and greater simplicity in income taxation by bringing the top 42 per cent and 47 per cent tax rates down towards the 30 per cent corporate tax rate. All of us agree with that. We understand the pressure on the Treasurer and on revenue. But, in the long run, governments from both sides should be looking towards equality between the company tax rate and the personal rate at 30 per cent.

John Freebairn of the University of Melbourne, a respected commentator in this area, says:

Australia as a small player in the global economy, lower taxes on the incomes of internationally mobile capital and skilled labour inputs are likely to entice more of these resources, both those with an Australian initial location as well as those with an initial overseas location, to locate within Australia.

Mr Freebairn argues that a tax rate of 30 per cent would be simpler and avoid complex tax minimisation schemes. Nothing could be further from the truth than that statement. He also argues that we should provide lower incentives to minimise tax, as the rate would be consistent across businesses and across different options for saving and investment. He says that ‘national productivity can be expected to rise with both the reduction of the distortion of taxation and with less wasteful diversion of scarce resources to tax administration and compliance’.

I would like to conclude my remarks by complimenting and indicating my support for the Treasurer’s future fund. We have a responsible Treasurer and a responsible government, and we have an irresponsible oppo-
tion which wants to challenge these things. The future fund has been established to help fund public sector superannuation liabilities. Unfunded superannuation liabilities for the Public Service, Defence, judges and other public servants make up 95 per cent of total Commonwealth unfunded super liabilities. At the last estimates, Finance showed that the proportions are approximately 70 per cent Public Service and 30 per cent Defence. The public liability is about $91 billion and it is estimated to reach $130 billion in 20 years time. So what the government has done is put money away in a fund. As I said earlier in my remarks, that is of no great advantage to current taxpayers and members of parliament. Yet the government has taken a responsible position to fund the unfunded liabilities that the Commonwealth faces, which are of an enormous magnitude. The fund has now been started and the Treasurer is contemplating further additions to that fund.

I commend the Treasurer for that very bold move. For 20 or 30 years we have argued in this parliament that unfunded liabilities for Public Service and Defence personnel should be funded. State governments, to be fair to them, have moved to fund their superannuation liabilities. The new super schemes are funding the liabilities as they become due because of the change in arrangements. I commend the Treasurer for his fortitude, his instincts and his capacity to draft and craft a budget that stands up to all criteria. It is a budget for the future; it is a budget for the present. It is a budget that will withstand the test of time for future generations because we have put down a blueprint to fix the tax system, to fix the superannuation system and to set Australia’s prosperity for both present and future generations. (Time expired)

Ms MACKLIN (Jagajaga) (1.11 pm)—This budget does nothing to address Australia’s skills crisis. Australian businesses are crying out for more skilled workers. Every day in every part of this country we hear new stories about skills shortages driving up costs and wages, jeopardising industry projects. Skills are a driver of productivity, yet this government has presided over a 75 per cent drop in skills over the last 10 years. You do not have to be a rocket scientist to work out why Australia is suffering a skills crisis. We have a shortage of skilled people because this government has massively cut education and training investment since coming to office.

An OECD report this month found that Australia had one of the largest declines in public investment in universities and TAFEs of any OECD country. We dropped by 8.7 per cent while the majority of our competitors increased their investment. We are one of only seven OECD nations to actually reduce government funding for tertiary education per student between 1995 and 2001. And just this week a new OECD report says that Australia needs to accelerate reform to improve education and training. This government has yet again missed the opportunity to reform Australia’s education and training system to address the very serious skills shortages facing our country.

From the time this government was elected it confused cutting education investment with real reform. The only new skills initiative in this year’s budget is an increase in skilled migration with an extra 20,000 skilled migrants to come to this country. Australia is already ranked third in the OECD for reliance on skilled migrants to address skills shortages. This government has imported 178,000 additional skilled migrants since 1997. At the same time, this government is responsible for turning 270,000 people away from TAFE since 1998 and around 160,000 qualified applicants away from universities since 1997.
Labor’s priorities are very different. We want to train Australians first and get them into training now. That is why we have put forward a proposal to introduce a $2,000 trade completion bonus for traditional apprentices who complete their training, a proposal which, I am sorry to say, this government has failed to adopt. It is a measure the government could have implemented immediately to encourage more Australians to complete their training in areas of critical skills shortage.

Adopting our proposal would have meant more qualified tradespeople in our workplaces next year—not forcing businesses to wait until 2010 for a qualified apprentice to come out of the Howard government’s technical colleges. Instead, the government chose to do nothing about the 40 per cent of people who start a new apprenticeship but do not complete their training. The government could have halved the attrition rate. They could have put 8,000 more qualified apprentices in our workplaces next year alone if they had picked up Labor’s trade completion bonus. Unfortunately, the government have decided to do nothing instead. All the government seem to be interested in is superficially boosting the numbers of young people who start an apprenticeship—not making sure that apprentices actually complete their training. It is time that we put an end to this very short-sighted approach.

Under Labor’s proposal, traditional apprentices would receive a $1,000 payment half-way through their apprenticeship and a further $1,000 at the completion of that apprenticeship. This scheme would aim to achieve an 80 per cent completion rate and would cost in the order of $80 million next year, if the government would pick it up. The proposal would mean less reliance on importing skills from overseas and an end to this government’s warped priorities on skills.

The budget has also failed to provide the support needed to urgently increase the number of young people who get a trade qualification at school. In his budget reply, the Leader of the Opposition announced the second stage of Labor’s proposals to tackle Australia’s skills crisis and to get more Australians into training. We want to give young people more opportunities to get vocational qualifications while they are still at school.

Unlike the government, federal Labor want to encourage more young Australians to finish school and to make vocational training a mainstream part of the curriculum in our schools. Last year, just 11,400 school students commenced apprenticeships. But the shocking part about that number is that 70 per cent of these apprenticeships were not in areas of skills shortage—only 500 commencements in metals and engineering and 400 in general construction. Clearly, we have to do something dramatic to increase the number of school based apprenticeships in areas of skills shortage.

The government should do as Labor has proposed and double the number of school based trade apprenticeships by creating an additional 4,000 training places in our schools for year 11 and year 12 students—that is, 4,000 places each year, not the total over the next four years that the government talks about. But schools also need additional support to take up these places. That is why school based trade apprenticeship places should attract—and this is Labor’s proposal—a 50 per cent skill shortage loading.

This additional funding of $1,750 per student apprentice should go directly to the school community. Schools could use the funding for a range of possible trade related measures, such as employing a school based apprenticeship advocate, improving trade facilities in schools, buying new equipment and creating apprenticeship opportunities
with employers. These are just some examples of how schools could use this money and increase the number of young people taking up trade apprenticeships while they are at school.

When fully in place, the Trade Apprenticeship School Incentive Scheme would cost in the order of $36 million each year. Once again, it is an affordable scheme that, unfortunately, the Howard government continues to refuse to implement. School based apprenticeships can be the difference between a young person finishing school or dropping out. I know the Prime Minister wants more young people leaving school, but I can assure you that that is most parents’ worst nightmare. Young people who leave school early are twice as likely to become unemployed as those who finish school. Parents want their children to be able to do vocational training while still at school so that they get the best possible start in life.

Coorparoo Secondary College in Queensland, for example, offer a range of school based traineeships and apprenticeships. They have a 100 per cent strike rate in terms of students completing their apprenticeship and finding a job. The principal says that they have never had a student drop out and that the results for students are nothing short of inspiring. Students who are thinking about dropping out transform into committed students when they start their apprenticeship. Keeping up with maths and English becomes important because students know that they need it for their trade.

Federal Labor are committed to reforming secondary schooling to provide more vocational options as part of school based apprenticeships, and we want to do that in cooperation with the states and territories. The key to encouraging young people to study a traditional trade is making sure that our schools have the support they need to expand vocational training opportunities and to target training where it is needed most.

Of course, it is not only in the trades where the government have presided, and continue to preside, over a major skills crisis; we also have serious skills shortages in the professions, where it is taking its toll—especially in the sciences. Civil engineers and medical scientists have been on the government’s skills shortage list for many years. Even though the government know they have major skill shortages in these professional areas, the number of Australians starting a science degree has fallen from a 1997 peak. Year 12 enrolments in physics, chemistry and advanced maths are falling steadily. Clearly, young Australians are not being sufficiently engaged by the wonders of science.

So one of our urgent tasks is to reinvigorate interest in physics, chemistry and engineering. It is vital for key Australian industries, particularly mining, construction and technology. Of course, we need to start much earlier than the senior years of secondary school. We need to start instilling in children the wonder and curiosity of the world around them through a very strong program of popular science in our schools right from the beginning. We also have to close the door on the very dusty, Dickensian workshops that for too many young students is their first introduction to subjects like woodwork or metalwork. Schools must be able to take pride in their trade facilities as they do, for example, in their computer facilities.

It is only by inspiring young children about the wonders of science and engineering that we can hope to reverse the decline in interest in science and technology at our universities. If our universities are to deliver these much needed skills we have to do something serious about investing in these very significant public institutions. We have to invest in our universities now to make
sure that the school children of today have the high-quality learning environment they need when they go on to further study.

We have had nine very long years of Howard government cuts and fee hikes that have left our universities in a very sorry state. The $5 billion in funding cuts and chronic underfunding are threatening quality in our universities. The effects are starting to show. Just last week the New South Wales Auditor-General reported that the Howard government has driven half of the universities in New South Wales into deficit. Five out of the 10 universities in New South Wales are officially in the red. These are the deficits: the University of Newcastle, $26.9 million; the University of Western Sydney, $26.9 million; the University of Technology Sydney, $12.2 million; the University of New South Wales, $9.9 million; and Southern Cross University, $5.9 million. Increased costs of $316 million at these universities outstripped increases in revenue of $202.5 million. These are shocking results for these universities, and eight out of the 10 universities reported a worse result in 2004 than in 2003.

The real impacts of these cuts are tragically apparent at the University of Newcastle, which I visited last week when I met with staff who are facing 450 job losses. This government’s underfunding means that 20 per cent of staff at the University of Newcastle are set to lose their jobs. That is the horrifying reality of this government’s budget cuts. The impact on the community of Newcastle will be devastating but no-one will feel the devastation more than the individual staff affected. This government should act immediately to grant the University of Newcastle regional funding and to back down on its decision to unfairly exclude the University of Newcastle from desperately needed regional funding that it has provided to similar regional universities, like the University of Wollongong. The University of Newcastle needs emergency support to prevent these horrific job cuts.

The No. 1 issue for universities continues to be this government’s refusal to provide the proper level of indexation. The government, through the Minister for Education, Science and Training, has categorically ruled out fixing the problem that the universities have named as their top priority. It is inevitable that the Howard government’s refusal to fix the problem will leave universities knocking on the door to ask for further HECS hikes. This will be a terrible blow to universities, staff and, most significantly, students. It guarantees that more Australian families will face still more massive fee hikes.

Already, students and their families are being forced to make up for the $5 billion in cuts that universities have suffered. The government is now intending to take an extra $839 million from students and their families over the next four years, through the latest 25 per cent HECS hikes. This figure will go even higher when the universities that have decided to increase fees from 2006 are added to the total. There are now an amazing 32 universities that have decided to increase HECS fees. How wrong the education minister was in 2003 when he promised:

What that means in real terms is that the HECS charge for most courses in most universities will not change at all.

He could hardly have gotten it more wrong. The vast majority of students in the vast majority of universities will have no choice but to pay higher fees because of this government’s decision to hike university fees by 25 per cent and because of this government’s refusal to properly index our university grants.

New figures provided last month by the Department of Education, Science and Training show that the Howard government’s in-
Introduction of FEE-HELP loans will generate a massive new debt for thousands of Australian students and their families, skyrocketing to over $3 billion by 2008-09. According to the department, debts are expected to rise from $256 million in 2004-05 to a total of $3.17 billion in 2008-09. The new figures also show that more than 60,000 Australian students will incur a FEE-HELP debt. These FEE-HELP debts are all about contributing to the payment of full fees that can be as high as $210,000. The government's legislation already allows this to rise to 200,000 students, and once the government has control of the Senate we fear that this number of full-fee students could go as high as the government chooses.

At a time when we should be encouraging more and more young Australians to go to university, this government is set upon creating a US-style university system where massive amounts of money open university doors and where Australian families are saddled with debts that many may not be able to afford to repay. Last week we had similar warnings from the Federation of Scientific and Technological Societies about the decline in Commonwealth investment in research and development. They showed that we have serious problems with a lack of investment in this area, which is critical for Australia's future. It is a disgrace that under this government the share of Australia's national wealth being invested in research is at the lowest level for decades.

I will finish with a few comments about schools. The story in our schools is no different. We have a government that persists with giving the biggest funding increases to the schools with the least need. The new spending the government has announced for capital is welcome, but long overdue. Labor wants to see this investment in the resources and facilities of our schools but the government lacks any vision about what this capital injection could do. There is no reform agenda in its policies, just a continuation of its unfair schools funding.

The government seems happy to allow its very flawed SES system to struggle along, while most non-government schools are not funded as the system suggests they should be. How you can have a system where most schools are treated as the exception is a mystery, most of all to the schools themselves. Surely exceptions should be exceptions, not the norm. But this government is determined to defend to the death its unfair system that has delivered the biggest funding increases to the wealthiest schools that need the money least. Labor's priority is, of course, to make sure that schools are funded on the basis of need, and that is what we will be pursuing vigorously.

Mr Slipper (Fisher) (1.31 pm)—At the outset I would like to commend the Treasurer on his 10th budget. It is an outstanding economic document and builds on sound economic management since the government was entrusted with the treasury bench in 1996. It is a document which shows that the government is well attuned to the needs of the Australian people, particularly those fortunate to be residents of the Sunshine Coast, an area I am very pleased to have the opportunity to represent in the Australian parliament. Appropriation Bill (No. 1) 2005-2006 and the cognate bills have followed on from sensible economic management, and the government has shown that it will not spend more than it earns. In fact, for 2005-06 there will be a budget surplus once again; this time, $8.9 billion. This surplus will follow on from surpluses of $9.2 billion this year and $8 billion for 2003-04.

Many people in my electorate were ecstatic when the Treasurer announced wide-ranging tax cuts for all sectors of the Australian community and were absolutely appalled...
when the Australian Labor Party, in the parliament and publicly, opposed Australians receiving a dividend for sound economic management through tax cuts given to them in the budget. I have spoken to numbers of Labor members opposite, and many of them are opposed to the tactics adopted by the Leader of the Opposition and the honourable member for Lilley. Apparently it was a knee-jerk reaction, and members of the shadow ministry and shadow cabinet were not consulted. Members of the parliamentary Labor Party were not consulted either. The message that is coming through to me from Labor colleagues is that their electorate offices have been inundated with angry phone calls from constituents who say: ‘The government is going to attain a majority on 1 July. The government is providing much needed tax cuts and tax relief. Please don’t hold these tax cuts up. Please enable the government to deliver its budget so that the money can flow through into the pockets of Australian taxpayers come 1 July this year.’

If the Labor Party had the numbers in the other place to try to force some sort of compromise then that would be, in my view, of dubious morality. But it makes absolutely no sense when on 1 July this year, which is barely six weeks away, the government will obtain a majority and will have the numbers to implement, in full and on time, the budget tax cuts and indeed the whole 2005-06 budget.

My electorate of Fisher will benefit greatly from the tax cuts, and people are pleased that, post 1 July, the Labor Party will no longer have the ability to be blood-minded and to deny people what is their just entitlement. In effect, it is a dividend on the Treasurer’s sound economic management since 1996. My electorate has a high number of retirees, unemployed people and low-income earners. The reduced tax rate from 17 per cent to 15 per cent will put extra money into the pockets of all earners. How on earth could the Labor Party actually vote in this place, and presumably in the Senate, against reducing the tax rates paid by Australians?

The threshold for those in the 42c tax bracket will be raised to $63,000 in July 2005 and then to $70,000 in July 2006, while those in the 47c tax bracket will have their threshold raised to $95,000 in July 2005 and then up to $125,000 in July 2006.

The Labor Party often bleat about people who are on middle to higher incomes receiving tax cuts. They believe that is inappropriate. But in Australia we do have a progressive tax system and, even after these changes introduced in the budget by the Treasurer, people who earn more will pay more—and that is appropriate. The more you earn, the more tax you pay. What we have sought to do is to bring back some equity into the system and provide an initiative for people to take on those extra hours. In a free and democratic society there should always be reward for initiative, enterprise and hard work.

I was very interested to see the front-page stories in newspapers around the country where ordinary workers, who through their hard work and long hours were earning relatively higher than usual incomes, were saying that although they had voted Labor all of their lives they had absolutely had a gutful of the Labor Party’s approach to the tax cuts. They were saying to the Labor Party: ‘Pass our tax cuts to us. Give us our tax cuts now.’ Yet we found yesterday in the House the Labor Party voting en masse against reducing the taxes of Australian citizens. The Leader of the Opposition has on occasions spoken about the need for tax relief, but unfortunately he tends to run with the foxes and hunt with the hounds. The government, in effect, delivered on some of the things that Kim Beazley has been calling for with respect to reducing the burden of taxes on Aus-
tralians, yet as soon as the government delivers the opposition seeks to frustrate.

In a democratic society the opposition has a vital role to play. But it ought not to be carping or negative or seek to deny the mandate given to the government by the Australian people at the last election. When all of the tax cuts are introduced and fully implemented, taxpayers will not reach the highest marginal tax rate until they are earning around three times the average weekly earnings. Self-funded retirees and part-pensioners in the electorate of Fisher who qualify for the senior Australian tax offset will have their tax-free threshold raised to $21,968 for singles and $36,494 for couples.

I think most Australians will also accept that the budget is responsible in the way that it treats those who are unemployed and not making genuine efforts to find work. The Sunshine Coast is often shown as an area of high unemployment. Part of the reason our unemployment is higher than one would expect is that it is a very desirable part of the country in which to live. If you have a choice of being out of work in Tasmania or South Australia or less desirable parts of the country than the part of the country that the member for Brisbane and I are privileged to represent, then it is easy to understand why people want to move to the Sunshine Coast. That is why our unemployment figures often appear to be higher.

It really is important to make sure that welfare gets through to the needy and not to the greedy. It is vital to make sure that those who can work even part time are encouraged to do so. With the declining birth rate and an ageing population, the challenge for all governments in Australia is that they are going to have to fund the increasing social security demand as we have an ever smaller proportion of the population in the paid work force and, as time goes on, an ever greater proportion of the population in retired and needing to draw on social security.

Most people accept that the sunny weather of the Sunshine Coast, the clean beaches and friendly people make the Sunshine Coast a very enjoyable place in which to live. The unemployed know this and this is why many of them travel to the Sunshine Coast rather than actually getting a job. If they are going to be unemployed they take the view that they may as well be unemployed in a beautiful location. The bad news for those people is that in the 2005-06 budget those who are deemed to be not genuine in their job-seeking efforts will be referred to participate in full-time Work for the Dole for 25 hours per week for 10 months a year. I believe this is appropriate, and this change announced in the budget is particularly popular on the Sunshine Coast. On top of that, an eight-week non-payment period will apply to those very long-term unemployed who fail to participate in full-time Work for the Dole. Some may suggest that these conditions seem harsh, but those who are able to work must be given every incentive to find a job and make a useful and responsible contribution to society.

One of the great challenges we have on the Sunshine Coast is our rapidly growing population and our increasing need for more spending on infrastructure. Over the next 10 to 15 years it is expected that the population of the Sunshine Coast will come close to doubling. That is because it is a wonderful place to live. There is a wonderful lifestyle with easy access to the capital city. But with 80 per cent of people travelling to and from the Sunshine Coast by road there is a desperate need to continue to upgrade our road infrastructure in particular. Hundreds of millions of dollars have been spent improving the Bruce Highway and a very considerable amount of money has been spent in particular on upgrading the Bruce Highway as far as Caboolture. That will remove the worst bot-
tleneck in travelling from Brisbane to the Sunshine Coast. I have been fighting to have the balance of the Bruce Highway upgraded—at least as far as Nambour, although my colleague the member for Fairfax would probably like to see it a bit further—to six lanes because, quite frankly, the road is unable to take the traffic currently endeavouring to use it. More money was allocated to the Bruce Highway upgrading and under AusLink the budget has allocated some $546 million towards Bruce Highway improvements.

The Bruce Highway is the major road link from Brisbane to North Queensland, and the whole of the area is experiencing a population explosion. The number of cars and trucks continues to increase so good roads are vital to ensure that families, tourists and workers can arrive safely at their destinations. All too often we hear of people who lose their lives because of the lack of quality of the roads. I am looking to increase funding for the Bruce Highway. I intend to sit at the door of the Minister for Local Government, Territories and Roads to make sure that we continue to receive the proportion of road funding that, as a community, we deserve.

I feel particularly honoured to be a member of the governing party that has been doing the right thing for the Australian people not only in 2005-06 but more generally and in fact every year since we were first elected to office in 1996. The past decade has been a period of overwhelmingly successful economic management. It is hard to recall that, 10 years ago, this government inherited a debt of $96 billion—that is $96,000 million. But by sound ongoing management that debt has been greatly reduced and by June next year will be down to merely $6 billion—that is, we have reduced it by $90 billion. Any government that has the skill to reduce a net debt of that substantial size in just 10 years deserves a big pat on the back and continuation in office. That is one of the reasons the Australian people once again comprehensively rejected the Australian Labor Party at the last election and said that we are sound economic managers, we are looking after the country’s finances and we deserve another three years in office.

With this spending plan the government is continuing to deliver, and the 2005-06 budget is the eighth we have brought down with a surplus. The opposition used to take the view that you could mortgage tomorrow’s prosperity to pay for spending today. Happily, most people in Australia and elsewhere now accept that governments ought to run their books in the same way as you would run your household finances—namely, that you cannot spend more than you earn. But, of course, the Labor Party is out of touch with the Australian people. I repeat that I was completely astounded with Labor’s position—as, I might add, were the overwhelming number of Australian Labor Party members in this place when they were told that they had to vote against tax cuts for their constituents.

On top of the $8.9 billion surplus announced earlier this month, the government has put in place a plan to protect citizens of the future from the many billions of dollars in superannuation payments that will not fall due until well into the years ahead. The future fund is another responsible act of the government, because we are making sure that the government’s unfunded liabilities are able to be met. We will set this future fund up in a way that the Labor Party will not be able to raid the till if they gain office. The future fund will not be able to be drawn on until it is in a position to meet all accumulated government liabilities.

It is important to recognise that this government has taken some very difficult and very important decisions. Today the Treas-
The Premier’s brag of spending $55 billion on infrastructure was a giant con because, by any measure, at least double that was needed to provide for current and forecast demand.

To demonstrate the duplicity of the state Labor government, Mr Springborg pointed out:

- If you take the current South-East Queensland Capital Works budget of around $3.5 billion annually and add CPI over the next 20 years the total would be at least $90 billion.

Of course, much of the state government spending comes from the federal government. A huge proportion of the revenues of Queensland come from the goods and services tax, so the Premier is enhancing his reputation as a great publicity whiz but ultimately his plan for infrastructure spending has been found sadly wanting. In particular, the Sunshine Coast has missed out. This is a tragedy because at various state elections areas of the Sunshine Coast have returned Labor members to support the Labor Premier of Queensland.

Regrettably, time is short. It would be good to be able to talk forever about the virtues of the 2005-06 budget. The budget delivers on sound economic management. It gives an $8.9 billion surplus, it gives tax cuts and it also confronts the looming challenge for governments in this country to provide for our ageing population and for the future liabilities of government. Yet the Labor Party opposes the budget. It is just so negative for the Labor Party to take this point of view; it is so negative for the Labor Party to attempt to deny Australians their tax cuts. The Labor Party is condemned. (Time expired)

Mrs IRWIN (Fowler) (1.51 pm)—I should begin my speech on the appropriation bills by declaring a vested interest in the outcome of this debate, and that should also apply to all other members of this parliament. Like most Australians, after hearing the Treasurer’s budget speech I did my sums on how much benefit I get from the changes...
to tax rates announced in the budget. As a backbench member of this House with no additional allowances, you could say that I am on the lowest salary of any member of this parliament. So mine would be the smallest of the income tax cuts. Calculating the tax cut on my base salary of $106,770 a year plus my electorate allowance of $27,300 a year gives me a total income of $134,370 a year. Checking that salary with the tax tables—and I thank the *Sydney Morning Herald*—I find that my tax cut from 1 July this year would be $41.58 per week, and from 1 July next year my tax cut would be $86.58 per week. As I spend all of my electorate allowance, the tax cut is actually less than that amount, but I could simply take that amount as salary if I wanted to. I will not get into an argument about whether I am overpaid for the work I do. I am happy to leave that to my constituents in Fowler.

To come back to the amount of the tax cut, for me that amounts to $86.58 a week. So you can imagine my reaction when looking at the other end of the tax scales—the end that 97 per cent of my constituents would be looking at: those with incomes of less than $58,000 a year. I can imagine how they might feel at the prospect of getting a $6 a week tax cut compared to my tax cut of $86 a week. There were not many champagne corks popping in the Fowler electorate on budget night, but there were many popping in the corridors around this parliament.

Of course, that $86 a week was not the only good news in the budget for members of parliament. Members who are in the chamber at the moment might like to listen to this: the Treasurer also announced that the superannuation surcharge will be abolished.

If I add together the two cuts, the income tax and superannuation surcharge, the total comes to—wait for it—$249.08 a week. That is a tax cut of just under $250 a week for a backbench member of parliament and a cut of only $6 a week for 97 per cent of workers in my electorate of Fowler. But what is more unfair is what this budget has in store for sole parents and those with disabilities. Their payment base is only $238 a week, yet the weekly tax cut for members of parliament is more than the weekly income of sole parents and disability pensioners—or, as will apply under the new work requirements, $216 a week for sole parents and $200 a week for those with disabilities. A backbench member of this parliament will be better off each week by an amount greater than the total payment to a sole parent or a person with a disability, yet people on those benefits will find that the government will cut their allowance by $22 a week in the case of a sole par-
ent and $40 a week in the case of a disabled person. Shame on you!

Two hundred years ago they would have been sharpening the blade on the guillotine for a ruling class as arrogant and as selfish as this government. The government have joined the ranks of those who have lined their own pockets at the expense of the most disadvantaged in our society—and how their tune has changed! When the surcharge was introduced in 1997, the member for Lindsay—I think the member for Lindsay is running late for question time again, and we know what the member for Lindsay is like when she is on the floor debating—could not restrain her joy. She told the House:

The people of Lindsay love this measure. They think it is fantastic ... the people of Lindsay, whose average income is around $40,000, or probably more likely $35,000, do not get to pay. They think that is pretty good. People living in Lindsay on $85,000 who have to contribute are a bit too red-faced to complain about it ... The people of Lindsay are doing it really hard. We can sit here in Canberra and have a really good time in very flash surroundings.

That is what the member for Lindsay said back in 1997. I wonder who is red-faced now, sitting here in Canberra having a really good time in really flash surroundings. I wonder if the member for Lindsay would be happy to table her superannuation surcharge notice, as I am prepared to do. I very much doubt that she will. And where is the Treasurer? Hasn’t he arrived yet?

The SPEAKER—Order! It being 2 pm, the debate is interrupted in accordance with standing order 97. The debate may be resumed at a later hour and the member will have leave to continue speaking when the debate is resumed.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Workplace Relations Reform

Mr BEAZLEY (2.00 pm)—My question is to the Prime Minister. I draw the Prime Minister’s attention to his consistent failure to guarantee Australians will not be worse off under his proposed industrial relations laws. If the Prime Minister cannot provide a guarantee Australian families will not be worse off, then how can these changes be good for Australia? Why is an old Liberal prejudice being stamped on a modern Australian economy?

Mr HOWARD—Mr Speaker, can I say through you to the Leader of the Opposition that on this issue my guarantee is my record. Can I also say to the Leader of the Opposition that his problem is his record. Ten years ago the Leader of the Opposition and those who then sat behind him said the world would come to an end, that living standards would be slashed, that workers would be thrown on the scrap heap, the unions would be destroyed and the economy would come to a halt if we passed our industrial relations reforms. Just as those predictions were wrong, let me tell the Leader of the Opposition through you, Mr Speaker, that the predictions he makes today and will make in the days ahead will also be proved wrong.

Over the last 9½ years the real wages of Australian workers under our industrial relations policy have risen by 14 per cent against the miserable 1.2 per cent under the policies that he said were for the welfare of the Australian workers. I simply say to the Leader of the Opposition that it is performance in this area that counts. You drove down the wages of Australian workers when you were in government. We have uplifted their wages, we have run the economy better, and it is going to be even better when these new reforms come in.
Workplace Relations Reform

Mrs ELSON (2.02 pm)—My question is addressed to the Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations. Would the minister inform the House how the government’s workplace relations reforms will provide protection for Australian workers and encourage higher productivity in the work force?

Mr ANDREWS—I thank the member for Forde for her question. Can I say to the House that the foundation of the current industrial relations system in Australia is one that was designed in the 1900s to deal with the problems of the 1890s. And the announcement which the Prime Minister made today will bring this system into the modern economy of the 21st century. That will mean more jobs, higher wages and better productivity, which will mean a better outcome for all Australians.

One of the most significant elements of this package is that for the first time in Australia at a federal level the government will introduce a legislated set of minimum terms and conditions of employment. For the first time in the federal history of Australia this government will introduce a minimum legislated set of terms and conditions, something which has never been done before for the workers of Australia. The member for Forde asked me about higher productivity. By simplifying the agreement-making process; by allowing an easier lodgment process for agreements, both collective and individual; and by allowing agreements to run for a period of five years, these things and others in this package will improve productivity in this country.

Furthermore, one national system of industrial relations, which is what this package is moving towards, will remove the costly, confusing and complex duplication of the state, federal and territory systems that operate at the present time. It is an idea whose time has come and this government will move towards introducing it. But what do we hear today from the Leader of the Opposition? All we hear is the same tired, old rhetoric that we have been hearing for the last 10 years. What we heard today from the Leader of the Opposition was that this will exercise downward pressure on wages and that this will mean that families will be worse off. What did he say in 1996? He said:

... the government is attacking the very basis of people’s living standards ... Attack wages, and you attack families.

As I said, 10 years later, there has not been one change in the rhetoric of the Leader of the Opposition and yet, over that 10 years, we have seen a 14 per cent increase in the real wages of ordinary Australians. That stands in stark contrast to the miserly 1.2 per cent increase that occurred under 13 years of the Labor government, of which part of the time the Leader of the Opposition was responsible for employment policies in this country. I remind the House again of what the opposition spokesman said back in 1995-96, because no doubt we will hear more of this today and in the coming days. This is what Mr Smith, the member for Perth, said on 17 October 1995:

The Howard model is quite simple. It is all about lower wages—
wrong—
it is about worse conditions—
wrong—
it is about a massive rise in industrial dispute—
wrong—
it is about the abolition of safety nets—
wrong—
and it is all about pushing down or abolishing minimum standards.
Wrong. They were wrong then and they are wrong now.

Workplace Relations Reform

Mr STEPHEN SMITH (2.06 pm)—My question is to the Prime Minister and it follows on from the Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations’ reference to legislative minimums. Can the Prime Minister guarantee that the following allowable matters will not be stripped from awards as a result of the government’s proposed review of allowable matters: penalty rates; allowances; redundancy pay; type of employment, such as full-time employment, casual employment, regular part-time employment and shiftwork; and loadings for working overtime or for casual or shiftwork? Will the Prime Minister guarantee that no individual Australian employee will be worse off as a result of these proposed changes?

Mr Howard—I simply say to the member for Perth, as I said to the Leader of the Opposition: my guarantee is my record. Let me add a few more things. We have talked about the 14.1 per cent increase in real wages. I remind those who sit opposite that the OECD recently found in its Taxing wages report that, on a purchasing power basis, the disposable income of the average Australian production worker is the second-highest in the OECD. According to the recent NATSEM survey, the strongest growth in private income from 1994 to 2002 was enjoyed by low-income households in Australia.

Mr Howard—I simply say to the member for Perth, as I said to the Leader of the Opposition: my guarantee is my record. Let me add a few more things. We have talked about the 14.1 per cent increase in real wages. I remind those who sit opposite that the OECD recently found in its Taxing wages report that, on a purchasing power basis, the disposable income of the average Australian production worker is the second-highest in the OECD. According to the recent NATSEM survey, the strongest growth in private income from 1994 to 2002 was enjoyed by low-income households in Australia.

Mr BEAZLEY—Mr Howard, I rise on a point of order. It is a question of relevance. We asked, incorporated in the question from Mr Smith, a set of questions on penalties and allowable matters. We want guarantees on it. We want to hear—

The SPEAKER—The Prime Minister is coming to the question.

Mr Howard—Not only have the real wages and incomes of Australian workers gone up but also more than 1.6 million new jobs have been created and our unemployment rate has fallen to a near 30-year low of 5.1 per cent. Australians have become wealthier, with real wealth per person having risen by more than 80 per cent in aggregate under the coalition or by 7½ per cent—

Mr Beazley—Mr Speaker, I rise on a point of relevance. The question was about penalty rates and allowable matters. We want guarantees on it. We want to hear—

The SPEAKER—The Prime Minister is coming to the question.

Mr Howard—The Leader of the Opposition and the member for Perth have asked me questions that go to the living standards of Australian workers, and I am pointing out that those living standards have risen over the last 9½ years at a rate that diminishes to a very great extent the performance of the former government. I would say to the rather excitable Leader of the Opposition—the fulminating Leader of the Opposition—that, as these reforms are implemented, there will be continuing increases in the living standards of Australian workers.

Taxation

Mr NEVILLE (2.10 pm)—My question is addressed to the Treasurer. Would the Treasurer inform the House how business is being denied the chance to prepare for tax cuts? How can this situation be reversed?

Mr Costello—I thank the honourable member for Hinkler for his question. The good news is that I can inform the House that legislation has passed the House of Representatives to give a tax cut to every Australian from 1 July this year. Unfortunately it was only this side of the House that voted for that legislation, but the people of Australia know this; Labor stands for higher taxes. The bill will ultimately pass the Senate and become law. However, for people to get their tax cut on 1 July, schedules for employ-
ers, which have to be tabled in the Senate, must not be disallowed, because these schedules tell the employers how much tax to withhold. The tax that they have to withhold will be very much less because of the budget we brought down this month.

Whether or not those schedules are disallowed in the Senate is very much up to the Leader of the Opposition. It is up to him as to whether his party votes to disallow those schedules. He was asked yesterday about his position. I regret to inform you, Mr Speaker, that he said some uncomplimentary things about me. I had a lot of trouble getting to sleep last night after what he said about me, but I will overlook that and tell the House what he said on the substantive issue. He said:

If Costello was out there concerned about business ... he would put for consideration those disallowable instruments when the Parliament’s risen.

In other words, ‘If Costello was concerned for business, he would make sure that the ALP never got to vote on this legislation.’ My duty to the nation is to ensure that the Labor Party does not get to vote on legislation! Labor cannot be trusted on these disallowable instruments, so it is my obligation to make sure that Labor does not get to vote. It is not the Leader of the Opposition’s obligation to make sure Labor votes the right way; it is my obligation to make sure that the Australian Labor Party does not get to vote.

Let me make this point clear: the introduction of these instruments into the Senate is not in my gift. Again the Leader of the Opposition showed his complete ignorance of this issue yesterday. He said the timing of this coming into the Senate was up to me. Let me make this point. The Commissioner of Taxation makes these schedules—

Mr Beazley interjecting—

Mr COSTELLO—by operation of law, and he has made these schedules because employers need to load them into their payroll systems.

Mr Beazley interjecting—

Mr COSTELLO—Mr Harry Evans has given us some very interesting advice on this. I hope he will release it because, by operation of law, once the commissioner has made them, he has to lodge them with the Attorney-General’s Department. Once they have been lodged with the Attorney-General’s Department, by operation of law they have to be tabled in the Senate within six days. That means, by operation of law, as is now conceded by the Clerk of the Senate, those rules have to be tabled in the Senate on 14 June, when the Senate next sits.

It is a very simple matter. If the Labor Party wants people to have their tax cuts, all the Leader of the Opposition has to say is that he will not disallow those schedules. It is not a hard thing to say. All he has to do is say, ‘I will not be disallowing them.’ The fact that he refuses to say what he will do is now causing confusion for 850,000 businesses. It is now causing uncertainty for millions of Australian taxpayers. This is a government which was elected as recently as October last year. This is a budget which it brought down in the first year of the term. These are tax cuts which every Australian deserves. These are tax cuts which have gone through the people’s house, the House of Representatives, and should be paid on 1 July. There is one person who stands between the tax cuts that Australians deserve and their ability to get them and that is the Leader of the Opposition. I call on the Leader of the Opposition and the Labor Party backbench not to delay that tax cuts and cause confusion for Australian business. Get out of the way and let Australians have the tax cuts they deserve.

Workplace Relations Reform

Mr STEPHEN SMITH (2.16 pm)—My question is to the Prime Minister. It follows
on from my earlier question about stripping from awards allowable matters such as penalty rates, allowances and loadings. It is related to the linkage between allowable matters and the no disadvantage test. Prime Minister, won’t the government’s proposed changes to the no disadvantage test simply mean that the entitlements of working Australians will be measured against a lower base and, as a consequence, their wages, conditions and entitlements will be reduced? Prime Minister, why won’t you guarantee that as a result of this change no individual Australian employee’s living standards will be reduced?

Mr HOWARD—As the member for Perth will know if he reads the announcement, the base for workplace agreements, be they collective or individual, will be the new Australian fair pay and conditions standard. It is set out in the statement what those things are. I point out to the member for Perth that under AWAs people have been better off than they have been under the award. Once again, it is a question of performance against rhetoric. The member for Perth imagines that the average Australian worker is going to look at the last nine years and the way in which his or her pay packet has gone up, their unemployment rate has gone down and their living standards have improved and say, ‘That’s very interesting, but the member for Perth has told me the world’s going to come to an end, so I’ll believe the member for Perth.’ I do not believe they will. The member for Perth was up here and was wrong, as the minister pointed out, on five predictions. He will be wrong again in relation to his new predictions.

Economy

Miss JACKIE KELLY (2.18 pm)—My question is to the Treasurer. Could the Treasurer inform the House how responsible economic management has kept Australia’s economy strong? Has the Treasurer seen state budgets that demonstrate a different style of economic management?

Mr COSTELLO—I thank the honourable member for Lindsay for her question. I can inform her that regretfully I have seen state budgets that are not in the interests of the Australian people. The Australian Capital Territory is forecasting a cash deficit in this financial year, a blow-out on its forecast; the Northern Territory is forecasting a cash deficit next financial year, a blow-out on its mid-year review; Victoria is forecasting a cash deficit, a blow-out on its budget update; and while Tasmania is predicting a cash surplus, it is predicting a fiscal deficit for 2005-06. South Australia and Western Australia are bringing down budgets today.

If you want an example of how economic mismanagement can deteriorate a situation, you need look no further than the state of New South Wales under the Carr Labor government. The Carr Labor government used to report its bottom line in fiscal terms. If it had reported its bottom line in fiscal terms, it would have shown a fiscal deficit of $979 million in 2005-06. So do you know what the New South Wales Labor government did? It changed the bottom line measure from fiscal deficit to operating balance so that it could show that it was not in deficit. The New South Wales government used to have a thing called the General Government Debt Elimination Act 1995 to constrain borrowing. In its recent budget, the New South Wales government announced that it was repealing that act.

New South Wales will receive an estimated $45 billion in GST revenue over the next four years and a $1.6 billion windfall. Far from using that windfall to cut taxes, the Carr government in its recent budget announced increased taxes, abolishing the exemption on stamp duty for refinancing mort-
gages—remember the GST is designed to allow for the abolition of stamp duty on mortgages. And get a load of this: the New South Wales Carr government hiked the general insurance tax up from five per cent to nine per cent, affecting every household in New South Wales. And get a load of this: the stamp duty goes on the grossed up GST value of the insurance policy. So they gross the insurance policy up with GST which goes to the state government and then they put a nine per cent tax on the insurance policy, including the GST. The New South Wales Carr government forecast its land tax to rise to $1.63 billion in 2005-06, up 13 per cent on last year. And get a load of this: land tax in New South Wales has gone up since the election of the Carr government by 200 per cent.

New South Wales consumers and businesses are now paying for Labor mismanagement. What did I say earlier? Labor stands for higher taxes. You can see that in this federal parliament and in the state parliaments around Australia. Mark Bethwaite, the Chief Executive of Australian Business Ltd, said:

The New South Wales budget is a disappointment. It does not deal with our competitiveness as a state. Lost opportunities business faces every day because of state government taxes and charges. It represents a missed opportunity for the state that was once the premier state.

That is what Australian Business Ltd said. You see what happens when Labor gets into government in New South Wales—it runs deficits and increases taxes. When Labor is in opposition, this government puts down $22 billion of income tax cuts in its budget and the Labor Party votes against it. Labor will still give no guarantee that those withholding schedules will go through the Senate and allow Australians to have their tax cuts on 1 July. Why? Labor stands for higher taxes. Get out of the way, Labor, and let Australians have the tax relief they deserve.

**DISTINGUISHED VISITORS**

The SPEAKER—I wish to inform the House that we have present in the gallery today members of the Representative Council of the Republic of Indonesia. On behalf of all members, I wish them a very warm welcome.

Honourable members—Hear, hear!

**QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE**

**Medicare Safety Net**

Ms GILLARD (2.23 pm)—My question is to the Minister for Health and Ageing. When did the Department of Health and Ageing, the Health Insurance Commission or the Treasury first inform the minister or the minister’s office of the impending blow-out in the costs of the Medicare safety net? What was the date of the first informal contact or correspondence between the minister or the minister’s office and the Minister for Finance and Administration, Senator Minchin, or his office about this blow-out? When did the minister or the minister’s office first raise with the Prime Minister or his office, by informal contact or by correspondence, the blow-out?

Mr ABBOTT—Let me say in response to the shadow minister that I am not going to play her game.

Mr Crean interjecting—

Mr ABBOTT—I am not going to go endlessly into this business of who said what to whom and when did they say it, suffice to say that—

Mr Crean interjecting—

The SPEAKER—Order! The member for Hotham!

Mr ABBOTT—the government knew that there was going to be an increase in the cost of the safety net. We knew before the
election that there would be and we made that clear in the pre-election financial outlook—

Mr Crean interjecting—

The SPEAKER—The member for Hotham is warned!

Mr ABBOTT—and we made it clear in the Charter of Budget Honesty.

Papua New Guinea

Mr LAMING (2.25 pm)—My question is to the Minister for Foreign Affairs. Would the minister explain how the government intends to continue Australian police support to Papua New Guinea in the light of recent developments in that country?

Mr DOWNER—First, can I thank the honourable member for Bowman for his question and acknowledge that he has returned from Bougainville as an election observer there. All of us would appreciate the very good work that he has done. I understand that the election is going smoothly, so that is good.

Today I met with the Papua New Guinean Foreign Minister, Sir Rabbie Namaliu, and the Minister for Internal Security, the Police Minister, Bire Kimisopa, and we had a good discussion about the future of the Enhanced Cooperation Program. We agreed that the Enhanced Cooperation Program is an innovative program, with the placement of police and officials into in-line positions being a central principle of the ECP, and that needs to remain. There is a strong commitment on both sides to finding a solution to the legal problems raised by the recent Supreme Court ruling. In the meeting we agreed to keep all options on the table at this stage because it is important that any future agreement is protected from future court challenges. I think the House would understand that. Officials will meet this afternoon, and they will meet in the next couple of weeks in Port Moresby as well, to work through the detailed legal issues.

It is clear from what the Papua New Guinean Foreign Minister has said, as well as from my own experience, that the Enhanced Cooperation Program is very popular with the public in Papua New Guinea. Usually the Labor Party latch onto something that is popular, if they possibly can. So I am surprised they are against it—not that they succeed too often. The Enhanced Cooperation Program is an enormously important initiative. I think it has the potential to make a great difference in Papua New Guinea and, if we can resolve the legal issues, we are going to be able to get it back firmly on track.

Medicare Safety Net

Ms GILLARD (2.28 pm)—My question is to the Prime Minister. Can the Prime Minister inform the House on what date prior to the election last year the Prime Minister or the Prime Minister’s office was first advised by informal contact of the impending blow-out in the costs of the Medicare safety net? When did the Prime Minister or the Prime Minister’s office first receive written advice from his department or any other department or agency about the Medicare safety net blow-out? When did the Prime Minister first receive written confirmation from a minister of the likely extent of the blow-out and was this from the Treasurer, Minister for Finance and Administration or the Minister for Health and Ageing?

Mr HOWARD—Let me say in reply to the member for Lalor that, like the Minister for Health and Ageing, I am not going to play these little games either, except to add this: it is true, as the minister said in his answer, that there was an increase in cost, and that was disclosed in the pre-election financial statement. Also, the member asking the question would, I am sure, be painfully aware of the costing done by the Department
of Finance and Administration, which was released on the eve of the election itself and which, I think, dealt with something called ‘Medicare Gold’.

I think the member for Lalor has completely overlooked one other reference to cost advice, and that was the information that I provided to the Australian public in an interview on AM the day after I had announced the government’s changes in relation to the Medicare safety net when I indicated that recent advice we had received indicated that there was going to be a further ratcheting up of the cost. That, of course, was part of the basis of the decision. After two wasted questions, can I assure the member for Lalor that there is no conspiracy, no cover-up; simply a sensible decision.

Schools Funding

Mrs GASH (2.30 pm)—My question is addressed to the Minister for Education, Science and Training. How does the recent budget boost funding for the upgrading and refurbishment of Australian schools? Is the minister aware of any other policies?

Dr NELSON—I thank the member for Gilmore for her question and the very strong campaign she has run for better funding of New South Wales government schools and the Ulladulla High School in particular. It is the all too common and sad experience of parents in Australian government schools, especially in the state of New South Wales, to find that the schools to which they send their children, whilst of a high quality in education, are frequently leaking, freezing in winter, extremely hot in summer, peeling paint and have a whole range of unmet maintenance issues.

It is known by those parents that the state governments are responsible for those schools; that they own them, administer them and basically fund them. Australian parents also know, however, that the Australian government makes a contribution to those public schools. I am very pleased to tell the member for Gilmore and other members of the House that in this budget the Australian government has increased its funding for capital works for public state schools in the state of New South Wales by 35 per cent. I might add that $54 million of that will, for the first time, go directly to parents, to P&Cs and to school principals. It will go to the families at the Bowral Public School, whose kids are freezing in the winter; to the kids at the Ulladulla High School, whose school looks like a mining camp welded onto the side a school; and to the parents at the Tuggeranong Public School, where you can smell the toilets from the road when you get out of your car. It will go to these and to many other important projects.

So, like the Treasurer, with some interest I looked at the New South Wales budget this year. New South Wales teachers, their unions, parents and this government have been looking with interest to see what the contribution from the New South Wales government would be for maintenance. When I read the maintenance budget for New South Wales government schools from the New South Wales government, it was $184 million. I thought I must be reading last year’s budget papers, because last year they cut their maintenance budget by 11 per cent to $184 million. Then I thought, ‘That can’t be true.’ So I tuned into Steve Price on 2UE on Tuesday afternoon on the 24th and I heard the authority, the New South Wales Minister for Education and Training, Carmel Tebbutt, being interviewed on this matter. Price said:

And the figure for maintenance. What was that? Tebbutt: $184 million.
Price: And what was that in last year’s budget? Tebbutt: $184 million.
Price: So there’s no increase? Tebbutt: That’s right.
Let it be known by every parent in the country who has a child in a government school, particularly in New South Wales, that when their child suffers because of the appalling state of maintenance of their schools they need to remember two things. The first thing to remember is that this government has increased its funding by 35 per cent in one budget and has given $38 million of that $54 million directly to the parents of New South Wales. The second thing to remember is that when they see Bob Carr reading books to kids on Sundays—and somebody else we know used to do that—they need to remember he is trying to hide from them the fact that the paint on the ceilings is peeling and that schools have appalling maintenance conditions because of the underfunding by the state government.

Children in Detention

Mr BEAZLEY (2.34 pm)—My question is to the Prime Minister. I refer the Prime Minister to his statement in this place yesterday that says:

I have been informed that the young child born in Perth last night will not in fact go back with its parents to detention ...

Isn’t it the case that at the same time the Prime Minister was making this statement the Minister for Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs yesterday reaffirmed that the mother and child would be returned to Christmas Island detention even though these officials knew health issues required the family to be housed in Perth in the weeks leading up to baby Michael’s birth?

Prime Minister, doesn’t this prove that yesterday you made policy on the run under pressure from public opinion?

Mr HOWARD—The direct answer to the question is no, and I will explain the basis of that assertion. Let me inform the House that the Tran family has been in community accommodation since 13 April 2005. The family was provided with that accommodation by the department, using its discretion to provide flexible alternative detention arrangements, since 13 April 2005. The reasons for that were matters relating to the period leading up to the birth.

My department was advised by the Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs yesterday that the family would continue to remain in community accommodation in Perth and there was no immediate plan to return them to Christmas Island. That was the basis of the advice that I correctly gave to the House yesterday.

The information I had was the information provided to me by my department. It was the position then, it remains the position, and it was the basis for the answer that I gave. It is not a question of doing anything on the run. It is a question of accurately reflecting the advice that I have received.

I might also point out to the Leader of the Opposition and to others interested in this matter that this was a decision taken in the exercise of its discretion by the department of immigration. It was not taken on my instruction and it was not taken, as I understand it, other than in accordance with the discretion. It stands to reason, if you just stop and think for a moment, that the family was taken to the alternative accommodation on 13 April in the lead-up to the birth of the child. It is going to continue in that alternative accommodation, so therefore it is totally illogical to assert that in some way the decision for the family to continue in the alternative accommodation was taken on the run by me yesterday in question time. Surely even the Leader of the Opposition would accept that that is an absurd proposition.

I have been further informed that the department has advised that it will not force the family to return to Christmas Island but
rather will discuss a range of accommodation options available to them, which include community accommodation and possibly a return to Christmas Island if the family desires. Could I point out to the House that this family, as merit assessments and other assessments stand at the moment, are illegally in this country. Let us remember that. They are illegally in this country at the present time and, when their final status is determined, there is a question of whether the family will return to Vietnam. It is of course open to the family to return to Vietnam at any time prior to that. But at no stage in relation to this case has policy been made on the run. They were provided with the alternative accommodation well before the birth of the child and well before the matters that were before the Senate estimates committees yesterday. I would just encourage the Leader of the Opposition not to grab the latest headline as the basis for his next question.

Beef Exports

Ms PANOPoulos (2.38 pm)—My question is addressed to the Minister for Trade. Would the minister inform the House of the contribution Australia’s cattle producers are making to our exports? Are there any alternative policies?

Mr VAILE—I thank the member for Indi for her question. Beef is a very valuable industry as far as the export industry in Australia is concerned, particularly in her electorate of Indi and particularly in the high mountain country in Indi. Beef is Australia’s largest agricultural export in dollar terms. Australia exported $4.6 billion worth of beef in 2004, a record. With regard to major markets, like the United States, on 1 January this year all tariffs were removed from beef going into the United States and, last year, 91 per cent of all beef imported into Japan came from Australia. So, needless to say, it is one of Australia’s most important agricultural industries. In the first quarter of 2005 Australia’s beef exports topped the $1 billion mark. This is the first time in Australia’s history that we have achieved that figure of $1 billion in the first three months of any year.

Notwithstanding the fact that in Victoria, the member’s state, they export over $600 million worth of beef per annum, we saw yesterday the breathtaking announcement by the Bracks Labor government in Victoria that they are going to close down access to national parks for grazing. They are going to stop the beef industry in Victoria grazing in the national parks. This is just the same as the ideologically driven policies of Latham Labor when Latham Labor was going to close down the forests in Tasmania. Beazley’s Labor policy on the Kyoto protocol is anti jobs, Latham Labor’s was anti jobs and the Bracks government is also anti jobs in the beef industry.

Mr Albanese interjecting—

The SPEAKER—The member for Grayndler!

Mr VAILE—The Bracks government’s ideological beef is going to cost 45 families in Victoria their livelihood, and that is something that we know the Labor Party does not care about—families in regional Australia.

Mr Albanese interjecting—

The SPEAKER—The member for Grayndler is warned!

Mr VAILE—We have in the gallery today some of those beef producers who are being denied the right to a livelihood in Victoria. Buff Rogers, Chris Cummins, John Cook and Simon Turner have brought their complaints to Canberra about the Bracks Labor government. We need to recognise their concerns. All they want to do is earn an honest living, and that is being denied by the Bracks Labor government. As was reported on the front page of the Melbourne Age yesterday, under
the headline ‘After 170 years, it’s the last round-up’, Peter Ryan, The National’s leader in Victoria, said:

Steve Bracks will go down in history as the man who killed the Man from Snowy River.

Just as the Beazley-led Labor Party in Canberra is going to stop Australians getting $21.7 billion worth of tax cuts, the Bracks Labor Party in Victoria is stopping honest Australians in regional Victoria earning an honest living.

**Immigration**

**Mr BEAZLEY** (2.42 pm)—My question is to the Prime Minister. Can the Prime Minister confirm that evidence to a Senate estimates committee yesterday showed that on 21 August 2003 an email from DIMIA to the Queensland Missing Persons Bureau detailed that Vivian Solon Young had been deported and that she was an Australian citizen? Can the Prime Minister confirm that, despite the fact that DIMIA clearly knew that Ms Solon Young had been deported, when her husband contacted Senator Vanstone’s office on 4 April this year he did not receive the courtesy of a call back from DIMIA and was not provided with any information about his wife?

**Mr HOWARD**—I am not going to try to confirm any one of those particular things. The reason I am not going to do it is that I have not had the opportunity today of reading the transcript of the evidence. I would point out, with respect and I hope courteously, to the Leader of the Opposition that he has just as much capacity as I do to read the transcript of evidence given before the Senate. I am aware of claims that have been made about an email being sent from somebody in DIMIA to somebody else suggesting that there had been an illegal deportation. Clearly these are serious matters and they will be examined by the Palmer inquiry. I repeat what I said before: when we have the results of that inquiry and we have all the facts in front of us, we can make a proper assessment. I do not really think that it aids a sober examination of what is a serious issue, for the Leader of the Opposition to be a serial question asker of the latest piece of evidence without having the full context.

**Greenhouse Gas Emissions**

**Mr ROBB** (2.43 pm)—My question is addressed to the Minister for Foreign Affairs. Would the minister inform the House how Australia’s greenhouse gas emissions compare internationally? Are there any alternative views?

**Mr DOWNER**—First, I thank the honourable member for Goldstein for his question—

*Mrs Irwin interjecting—

**Mr DOWNER**—The pronunciation is Goldstein, I think you will find. Perhaps we can have that debate instead of the MPI later!

The government is taking substantive action to address climate change. The latest figures show that our $1.8 billion national climate change strategy is working. The national greenhouse gas inventory released a couple of days ago showed that our greenhouse gas emissions for 2003 were only 1.1 per cent higher than in 1990. Compare this to, say, Canada’s 2002 emissions, which were 57 per cent higher than in 1990; Spain’s, which were 33 per cent higher; Ireland’s, which were 28 per cent higher; New Zealand’s, which were 27 per cent higher; and Japan’s, which were 21 per cent higher. I use those countries as examples because they have all signed up to the Kyoto protocol. While our emissions increased by only 1.1 per cent from 1990 to 2003, over the same period our real GDP as a country has increased by 51.9 per cent. It shows that we are doing a good job in this country by ensuring that we bring these emissions under control.
The honourable member asks whether there are any alternative views. The Labor Party, as an article of faith, says that we should sign up to Kyoto. This is the policy that even Mark Latham took to the last election, yet the member for Grayndler said yesterday that the 1.1 per cent increase in emissions confirms the Labor Party’s ‘worst fears’ that ‘greenhouse pollution continues to soar’. Let us try to understand what this means. It means that Labor does not believe just in Kyoto; Labor believes that we should do massively better and should have targets way below the targets that have been set for Kyoto. If that is Labor’s policy—since it believes that a 1.1 per cent increase is somehow contemptuous—and if the Labor Party’s policy is therefore more radical than Kyoto, it should tell the Australian public. Such a policy would devastate jobs in this country, it would devastate the Australian economy and we would be back to the sorts of economic conditions we had when the Labor Party was last in office, with 11 per cent unemployment and interest rates of up to 17 per cent for home owners.

The simple fact is that the Labor Party does not know what it is talking about on these issues. On the one hand, it says it believes in Kyoto; on the other hand, it argues that Kyoto is completely inadequate. That sort of incompetent incoherence from the Labor Party is what we are entirely used to.

Influenza

Mr TICEHURST (2.48 pm)—My question is addressed to the Minister for Health and Ageing. What is the government doing to ensure that Australia is well prepared to meet the threat of an influenza pandemic?

Mr ABBOTT—I thank the member for Dobell for his question and I also thank him for his work as Chairman of the government backbench Committee on Health. I can inform him and the House that we do not know whether there will be a flu pandemic, but we do know that the risk is higher than ever and we also know that the consequences could be very serious indeed.

Last year’s budget provided $114 million to build up a stockpile of antiviral drugs and, thanks to this foresight, Australia now has one of the world’s largest stockpiles of these important drugs. The government is currently stockpiling 50 million syringes, 40 million surgical masks and also extra ventilators and negative pressure units for possible use in hospitals. The government is in regular contact with CSL about the possible production of a candidate vaccine for pandemic flu. In the most recent budget, the government provided a further $23 million towards the establishment of a World Health Organisation collaborating influenza laboratory to be located in Melbourne, one of only four such laboratories in the world. In cooperation with the states, the government is finalising a draft management plan for pandemic influenza, and I expect that plan to be released for
public information and comment within the next fortnight. Pandemic influenza is a daunting prospect, but I can assure the House that the World Health Organisation believes that Australia is as well prepared as any country in the world to meet this threat.

Immigration

Mr BEAZLEY (2.50 pm)—My question is to the Prime Minister. I refer the Prime Minister to his statement that, before considering further action, he intends to allow the Palmer inquiry to run its course. Is the Prime Minister aware of media reports that Mr Palmer believes he cannot properly inquire into over 200 cases of wrongful detention and that he believes that an open inquiry with judicial powers to compel and protect witnesses is required? Is the Prime Minister also aware that Senator Vanstone has not ruled out a judicial inquiry? Given this new information, will the Prime Minister now immediately establish a judicial inquiry?

Mr HOWARD—The answer to that question is no.

Small Business

Mr HENRY (2.51 pm)—My question is addressed to the Minister for Small Business and Tourism. Would the minister advise the House on the benefits to small business from tax cuts outlined in the budget?

Fran Bailey—I thank the member for Hasluck for his question. I can inform him and all members of the House that Australia’s 1.2 million small businesses will benefit from $21 billion of personal tax cuts and $1.8 billion of business tax cuts, on top of the $1.2 billion from the 25 per cent entrepreneurs tax discount. This means that small businesses can reinvest in their businesses. I want to tell you, Mr Speaker, that small businesses right around the country want to pass on the personal tax cuts to their 3.3 million workers on 1 July. But they are being prevented from reinvesting in themselves and they are being prevented from passing on these tax cuts by the blocking tactics of the opposition. In addition, the opposition’s tactics are placing an unnecessary burden on all small businesses, because they now, as we know, have to use two alternative tables looking at those different withholding tax rates.

Let me get on the record what Mr Craig Winkler, the CEO of MYOB, one of the largest suppliers of payroll software packages to small businesses around the country, said: ‘If these tax cuts are not passed before 1 July, the cost to small businesses in time and money is potentially enormous.’ It does not matter what spin the Leader of the Opposition and any member of the opposition place on this issue. Their action demonstrates that they have absolutely no commitment to small businesses around this country.

Immigration

Mr BEAZLEY (2.53 pm)—My question is to the Prime Minister. Given that the administration of the Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs appears to have collapsed, and given that there are now more than 200 legal Australian residents who have been wrongly detained or deported, and given the revelation that Senator Vanstone’s senior adviser attempted to keep the circumstances surrounding the deportation of Vivian Solon a secret, will the Prime Minister now sack Senator Vanstone and establish a royal commission to sort out this mess?

Mr HOWARD—Let me spend a moment in answering that question. Firstly can I say with regard to the last part of the question that I do not intend to relieve Senator Vanstone of her responsibilities. It remains the case that as far as future action is concerned I will await, as I have said in the past, the outcomes.
The Leader of the Opposition has raised the question of the 201 cases. If I could take a moment of the House’s time, I think it may be interested in the background of these. I have been informed that during the period of July 2000 to April 2005 over 88,000 people were located and detained by DIMIA as suspected unlawful noncitizens or working in breach of their visa conditions. Can I say in defence of the department that this is a department that is doing the job that it is charged under the legislation to do. We have often heard from the opposition about enforcement action in relation to noncompliance, with people who have overstayed their visas or illegal immigrants. Surely nothing critical can be said of the department for doing its job. Of these 88,000 cases, some 201 individuals fell into the category where the person released from detention was recorded in the system as ‘released as not unlawful’. In other words, their presence in Australia was not found, after investigation, to be unlawful. That represented 0.2 per cent of people located as a result of the compliance action.

What the minister did, so far from covering it up, was instruct the department to go back over the available records to find the 201 cases where people had been released and, in order to find out whether those 201 included any Rau or Alvarez type cases, refer all of them to the Palmer inquiry. That is not, in defence of Senator Vanstone, the behaviour of a minister who is trying to cover something up. In relation to the 201 people, half of them were detained for very short periods of time. Establishing a person’s identity and resolving a person’s lawful status in Australia can be difficult for a number of reasons. Misleading and false information often provided by people can further complicate and prolong the issue.

The opposition cannot have it both ways. It cannot, quite rightly, call for an immigration system that makes sure that people who are illegally in this country are dealt with, and then in the next breath make a sweeping and blanket condemnation of the department. I remain of the view, and it remains the government’s position, that we will allow the Palmer inquiry to run its course. When we have a proper analysis of the facts then—and only then—will I and the government give consideration to what further action might be taken.

**PRIME MINISTER**

Censure Motion

Mr BEAZLEY (Brand—Leader of the Opposition) (2.57 pm)—by leave—I move:

That this House censure the Prime Minister for failing to sack the Minister for Immigration, Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs and call a Royal Commission into the Howard Government’s scandalous mismanagement of Australia’s immigration system.

Nothing is more important than this area of national policy. It is deeply bound up and integrated into the protection of Australia’s borders and the proper management and security of this country. What the Prime Minister and this government have demonstrated is that they have had all the words out there in public on how you conduct border security—they have won elections on those words—but when it actually comes to practical implementation of policy, in a way that is both effective and humane, they cannot do it. That is the simple fact of the matter. When it comes to implementing border protection policy in a way that is both effective and humane, it cannot be done. That puts all Australians at risk at many different levels, and I will go into that a bit later in my remarks.

The Prime Minister’s conduct of this portfolio and that of his government have been so shameful that they now have a backbench in open revolt. You now have responsible senior figures on their backbench attempting
to put in place legislation that will restore a
bit of effectiveness and humanity to their
border protection policies. We have not yet
had an opportunity to seriously study those
resolutions, but I can say this: they are going
very much along the right lines. If the Prime
Minister permits that legislation to be placed
before this chamber, we are going to con-
sider it sympathetically. We have our own
views, of course, in various different areas,
and, as with any other piece of legislation,
we will express those views in our amend-
ments. But we think that when somebody is
on the right track you should support them
and put those things through. There is a
chance that through that process we will fi-
nally start to arrive at effective border pro-
tection policies—policies that we do not
have now.

Understand this, Mr Speaker: the reason
the Palmer inquiry is underway has got noth-
ing to do with getting at the truth but every-
thing to do with having a diversion so that
difficult questions can be pushed off while
that inquiry is taking place. But that inquiry
is not to be empowered in a way that would
make absolutely certain that every conceiv-
able piece of information will come before it.
It is a classic example of a government hid-
ing behind the excellent reputation of an ex-
cellent public servant—in this case, a former
police commissioner—while they run the
metaphorical finger around their collars and
wipe the sweat from their brows as they sit
down to work out what they ought to do.

The problem for the government is this: firstly, Mr Palmer was doing a job that he
should have been left to do and that he
should now immediately return to. When he
was appointed, none of us knew what he was
doing, because that for some reason was a
state secret withheld from the public gener-
ally. When we approved his appointment—
and we suggested that he should have better
powers—we did not know the function that
he was then performing. We do now. Had we
known then we never would have supported
the suggestion that he should be taken out of
the firing line in a critical other area of bor-
der protection to provide the government
relief. They could have looked to somebody
else to do that for them, if they must have.
He should never have been taken out of the
firing line—in an absolutely critical part of
another aspect of our border security, as the
Inspector of Transport Security—to do that.
We will leave that particular element of the
question to one side. Having, however, put
him in place, this government was absolutely
obliged to clothe him with proper powers.
They never have been prepared to do that.
They have found since then, of course, that
they have an inquiry that could not con-
ceivably begin in the space of time available
to them to get to the bottom of the mess that
has been exposed.

The Prime Minister in his answer to my
last question stood up here as though every-
thing in DIMIA was perfect: it was entirely
understandable that 200 people who were
Australian citizens or legal residents ran foul
of the processes; it ought to be perfectly
normal and it was perfectly acceptable that
that should happen. Prime Minister, all I can
say is that you were not watching Mr Farmer
before the Senate committee yesterday and
you were not watching your minister before
the Senate committee yesterday. They were
not saying, ‘Oh, what a perfect performance
this is;’ they were saying, ‘Oh, God, how
could this happen? How could this have
come about?’ In the case of the head of the
department it was, ‘Yes, indeed, I am sorry
that this sorry state has emerged.’ It is a sorry
state, indeed, but it is not Mr Farmer who
should have his head in his hands; it is the
Prime Minister who should have the minis-
ter’s head on his table. That is what should
have happened here.
The Prime Minister has been defending this vagueness, in power terms this pathetically inadequate inquiry and this completely hopeless response to what is obviously a serious cultural and administrative problem inside DIMIA. The Prime Minister has had plenty of opportunity to act. It is not as though this fell out of the trees yesterday. This has been going on for weeks and weeks and weeks, getting worse and worse and worse as the government’s response has got weaker and weaker and weaker to the various propositions that have been put to it not simply by us on this side of the House but by the community more generally and by the media. It has got to the point where we saw the sight yesterday of the Prime Minister standing up in this place, after having been asked a question about the fate of a baby and whether or not the baby would find himself in detention with his parents immediately after his birth, saying something quite emphatic about that: ‘No, that wouldn’t occur.’ The minister an hour or so later appeared before the Senate estimates saying, ‘Well, of course the baby will be returned to detention along with its parents,’ and then taking a 20-minute toilet break while she got her head set right by the Prime Minister at that point of time.

This is total confusion in a department that is symptomatic of that confusion. It is disgraceful. Furthermore, it beggars belief that, an hour or two after a prime ministerial answer in this place, the department would actually get wrong an answer as to the status of the person. Quite clearly there was a piece of advice that they thought the Prime Minister’s office might like to hear and might like to deliver and another piece of advice on which they would act.

Then we have the extraordinary situation of Ms Solon—a person in the knowledge of the department and at least its middle level now for some years. They knew that that Australian citizen had been illegally deported. There was also total knowledge within the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and within DIMIA as to her address and her location. But when her husband made inquiries as to where his wife was—and this is the great family-oriented political party opposite us!—the answer was, ‘Well, sir, we don’t know. That is information we can’t give you.’ Then what emerges from the office of the minister? Is it: ‘Look, we’ve got a problem here. Let’s make absolutely clear what happened. Let’s offer this bloke an apology. Let’s sort this circumstance out’? No, it is: ‘How can we cover this up?’ Prime Minister, how can you defend that behaviour in the office of one of your ministers—by your senior minister—dealing with an Australian about the location of his wife: ‘We do not want this man to understand what we know and how his wife has ended up there. We do not want them to know that’? The Prime Minister says: ‘That’s all right. Do I need to put in place a proper inquiry or investigation into these matters? No, I don’t.’

We have now had the testimony of Mr Palmer. For the last week or two, if you recollect in this place—subliminally, at least; and overtly indeed—we have been told by the minister, by the department and by the Prime Minister: ‘Don’t worry about the fact that you’ve now dug out the case of Alvarez Solon. Don’t worry about the fact that we’ve now revealed that there are a couple of hundred people who were illegally detained at some point in time. We’re going to flick this across to Mick Palmer. Mick’s going to include that in his considerations.’ Mick Palmer came out yesterday and said, ‘No, I’m not. I’m not going to do that, thank you very much. I could not conceivably conduct such an inquiry.’ He will also have reverberating in his mind the appearance of what is going on at the airports of this country now, with people wandering around with camel
heads out of passengers’ baggage and folk wandering around distributing cocaine like a pack of playing cards. He is thinking, ‘There actually is something I need to do.’ His minister, who is not the minister under censure here but probably ought to be as well, says: ‘You’ve got this chap all wrong. His job is not to think about those sorts of things; his job is to wait for a terrorist attack and then write a very good report. That is what he is supposed to do.’

When you look at what Mr Palmer was touted as doing before his secret appointment was made you will see that the Inspector of Transport Security was not to be a reactive fellow but a proactive fellow, a chap who would work his way through the performances of all the airports and other transport nodes around this country, work out where the vulnerabilities were—because he has a clever and experienced mind—and make recommendations to government about what to do to protect the people of this country. No doubt Mr Palmer said to the government, ‘You know this alibi you’re using in regard to me, that I’m going to have a look at these couple of hundred cases and the Solon case? No fear! I want to get back to doing what I am best qualified to do as an ex senior police officer: protecting the people I love, protecting the people of this nation and doing my job as an Australian citizen of standing and effectiveness.’ That is what he wants.

The problem is, Mr Prime Minister, that when he decided to say that, which he probably decided in his heart a very long time ago—and, for all we know, probably told the minister a very long time ago—he stripped away your last facade, your last point of whitewashing cover. There is now clearly an issue that has to be investigated in regard to Alvarez Solon, there is clearly a situation that has to be investigated in regard to these couple of hundred cases and there is probably a deal more that should be done in inquiring into the first case that started all of this—the illegal detention of Ms Rau. There is probably more to be done on that because it is not possible that an inquiry that does not have judicial powers could have had all the information presented to it that was possible in that case. In fact, Prime Minister, months into this issue you have nothing going on that will give the Australian people any confidence that it will be properly investigated or that you have any grip at all on your border protection policy, either in terms of its effectiveness or the humanity of its operation. You have nothing at all going on.

The SPEAKER—Order! I remind the Leader of the Opposition not to use the term ‘you’.

Mr BEAZLEY—The Prime Minister has nothing at all going on. That is simply not good enough. In their crisis management, the government should by now have recognised they have a serious problem. Your backbench is telling you that you have a serious problem in the structure of your laws. Your inquirer is telling you that you have a serious problem in the structure of your investigation. As your minister bumbles away for all the world to see, as she has in estimates and on repeated TV and radio programs over the course of the last four weeks, you know that the public knows you have a problem.

We on this side of the chamber are absolutely clear cut about what we see needs to be done. We need to look at the problems that have occurred, with proper investigation. We need to look at the problems that have
occurred with the horrors of detaining kids that should be out of detention. All it took was a Malaysian newspaper for the last little baby to be released. It took a Malaysian newspaper to get the penultimate baby released and it took a furphy between the Prime Minister’s office and the minister yesterday to get the ultimate baby released—there are only 65 to go in this operation.

We have a policy that says that you do not put those babies in detention; you look after them properly outside. We have a policy that says, ‘Make absolutely certain you’ve processed at least 90 per cent of these people within 90 days. If you haven’t, and you need to sustain them in detention, do it so that the onus goes onto the department to demonstrate they are likely absconders.’ We need a border protection policy that includes mandatory detention. I do not blame the Liberal government for mandatory detention. It was put in place in the time of the Keating government. It was put in place for a number of purposes. One of those purposes was as a deterrent. Another of those purposes was health protection. Another of those purposes was security protection. But there was always the assumption that there was competent administration, that these cases would proceed as rapidly and as humanely as possible. The time has now come for the government to face these facts and to deal with it legislatively themselves—and, if they cannot bring themselves to do that, to let Mr Georgiou do it.

I am going to take an indulgence and deal with a bit of history here, because the Prime Minister as usual had his history falsified a couple of days ago when he got up in this place. He accused me of flip-flopping on the issue of border protection. He accused me of flip-flopping on the issue of border protection. You will recollect that he said that in this place. I will tell you what happened, as what was done was done at great cost to my party as we stood on principle. He presented me with a piece of legislation which, properly interpreted, would have permitted the Australian Navy to sink the Hobart yacht race without recourse to the law. He produced a piece of legislative rubbish, and he demanded that the Labor Party pass it. We refused to, and we lost a great deal of support in the electorate. Then your minister, Mr Ruddock—

Mr Downer—You were robbed!

Mr BEAZLEY—I’m not complaining about being robbed, my friend; I am giving you a history lesson, and you need it above all.

The SPEAKER—Again, I remind the Leader of the Opposition not to use the pronoun ‘you’.

Mr BEAZLEY—He needs it above all. I have such a vivid recollection of the then minister for immigration, now Attorney-General, coming to see me with his second bill, sitting down in my room and saying to me, ‘I think you’ll find, Kim, that this meets the objections that you raised.’ You can deny that if you like but there were witnesses to our mutual conversation. The simple fact of the matter is that is what the government did. And what did we do then? Because we were serious about border protection, we passed it. That is what we did then. When that was exposed in the debate I had with the Prime Minister during the election campaign, though he was way ahead of us at that time, the so-called public opinion worm went through the roof. When that was exposed, all of a sudden that election became a contest, as the public recognised at that time that the Labor Party had absolutely established its case as the party that knew what to do about border security.

The simple fact of the matter is this: only the Labor Party has had a clear-cut understanding of what ought to be done about border security. Only the Labor Party has had the administrative propositions in place to do
it humanely and effectively. What we have from the Liberal Party—or what we have from the government, not from all of the Liberal Party; Mr Georgiou seems to understand these things—and the Prime Minister now is a cover-up of the most incompetent administration of this critical area of government policy that you could conceive of, that incompetence only matched by its inhumanity. The public has had it. The public believes that Vanstone should go and the public believes—

*Government member interjecting—*

**Mr BEAZLEY**—They say it, my friend.

*Government members interjecting—*

**The SPEAKER**—Order! Members on my right!

**Mr BEAZLEY**—The public believes that there should be a proper inquiry into all of this. The Prime Minister simply will not provide it. The Prime Minister will wait and be told by Mr Palmer that he has to do it. He need wait no longer; the Prime Minister can now act. It is because he fails to do so that the Prime Minister simply should be censured.

**The SPEAKER**—Is the motion of the Leader of the Opposition seconded?

**Mr Laurie Ferguson**—I second the motion and reserve my right to speak.

**Mr HOWARD** (Bennelong—Prime Minister) (3.18 pm)—I had thought until a few moments ago that the only leader of the Australian Labor Party in history who constantly refought election campaigns he lost was Paul Keating. I now learn that the current Leader of the Opposition joins Mr Keating in being congenitally incapable of moving on to the issue of the day. But let me spend no more time, at present at least, on the protestations of the Leader of the Opposition that somehow or other in 2001 he was robbed and that if only the voters had followed the worm and not their own commonsense he would have become Prime Minister of Australia. That will do wonders for the commercial purveyors of the worm on Channel 9. Maybe you should now conduct the politics of this country according to how the worm moves on a particular issue, Mr Speaker. This is the kind of nonsense that the Leader of the Opposition—

**Ms Hall**—Mr Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I would like to draw your attention to the fact that the Prime Minister is using the word ‘you’ and ask you to ask him to refrain from doing that.

**The SPEAKER**—I thank the member for Shortland for her point of order, but I would remind her that the rule about the use of the word ‘you’ depends on whether it refers specifically to someone on the other side or is used as a general term. I asked the Leader of the Opposition not to use ‘you’ in the personal sense.

**Ms Hall**—Further to my point of order, Mr Speaker, the Prime Minister directly referred to the Leader of the Opposition as ‘you’. As such, I would ask you to request him not to do so.

**The SPEAKER**—I am sure the Prime Minister is well aware of not misusing the word ‘you’.

**Mr HOWARD**—The Leader of the Opposition has moved a censure of me in the following terms, and I will address it very directly. The motion is:

> That this House censure the Prime Minister for failing to sack the Minister for Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs and call a Royal Commission into the Howard Government’s scandalous mismanagement of Australia’s immigration system.

Let us go to the substance of what is involved in this charge by the Leader of the Opposition against me, in particular, and against the government in general. It arises
in particular out of two cases that everybody in Australia, on the facts currently known, would regard as sad, unfortunate and potentially involving other judgments and considerations when the full facts are known. Those are the Rau and Alvarez cases. In my view and in the view of the government, if you wanted to really get to the facts of each case, both of those issues involved having somebody competent in an understanding of policing and immigration matters to conduct, essentially, a factual inquiry to establish the fact base.

I say to the House and, in particular, to the Leader of the Opposition, that when I had my initial discussions with the minister, with the secretary of my department and with my other senior colleagues, consideration was given as to what kind of inquiry should be embarked upon. The reason that the government decided to invite Mr Palmer to do it was that his background seemed to us to commend itself far more to a proper examination of the facts than to choose somebody else at that time. Mr Palmer had a number of things to commend him. The first thing he had to commend him was the fact that he was a former police officer and a former Commissioner of the Australian Federal Police.

Bear in mind that in relation to both of these cases there was an involvement of state police. In fact, probably the most voluble interlocutor on the whole of the Alvarez case—and, I think, also on the Rau case—has been the Queensland Premier. I am not saying he has not got a right to talk about it, but his buy-in in the two cases was the involvement of the Queensland police. It seemed to me the quintessentially right person to choose for this was somebody who had a police background, because a great deal of the work that is carried out by DIMIA involves factual examination. So I would have thought that the case for appointing Mick Palmer was overwhelming and, if you really wanted to get to the facts of the case, far more desirable than choosing somebody else. That is the reason why we decided in the first place.

Bear in mind that I have said repeatedly, as has the minister: ‘Let us get the facts from Palmer. Then we can make a decision about the next steps that are going to be taken.’ That is an eminently defensible position and I do not believe on that ground this House should support and sustain the censure that has been moved against me by the Leader of the Opposition. He has to establish, before the bar of opinion in this place, a case to censure me. Prima facie, the decision I took to appoint Palmer rather than a judge was utterly defensible because Palmer was uniquely equipped to get to the facts of the case and, I believe, to get to the facts of the case far better equipped than somebody not having the same police background that Palmer has clearly had. I defend completely and unconditionally my decision to appoint Palmer as head of the inquiry.

Ms King interjecting—

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

Mr HOWARD—There has been comment made in this place about the role of the minister and comment about the role of her chief of staff. One of the central tenets of the argument of the Leader of the Opposition during his censure motion just a few moments ago was that there had been a deliberate attempt by John Nation—in the name, presumably, of the minister—to suppress proper public ventilation of matters concerning Mrs Alvarez Solon. That was the claim made by the Leader of the Opposition. He did not hold back. He went in boots and all against John Nation. He did not muck around. He did not spare him anything. Let
me read an email that I have received, and which I will also table:

I have just heard the assertion contained in a question to the Prime Minister that I instructed that the search for Ms Alvarez Solon be carried out in secret. This is not correct. I did pass on to DIMIA the concern of Mr Young when I spoke to him in response to his email enquiring about his former wife that he wanted his family's privacy respected. The note I made at the time noted a wish for 'absolute privacy'. This is something he mentioned on a number of subsequent phone calls. On the day Premier Beattie released some personal details about the case, he rang me to register his concern and I undertook to call Premier Beattie's office and pass on his concern.

My recollection is that there were numerous references in the media to the fact that the family had requested privacy.

I did not tell the Department how to conduct the search for Ms Alvarez Solon. I simply passed on the concern of Mr Young.

It is signed by John Nation and I table the statement.

Every time anybody gets up in this place and says something that Offends the sensitivities of those who sit on the opposition front bench, a chorus comes out of 'apologise, apologise'. Well might I hear many on this side telling the Leader of the Opposition to 'apologise, apologise' for the way in which he has rather pathetically slandered the chief of staff of the minister.

In the time I have left I go to the two issues that have excited not only the Leader of the Opposition but many that sit behind him. They have really excited him today. They are the circumstances—and this has all been of a piece with his attempt to denigrate the minister for immigration—surrounding, not my decision, but the decision of the immigration department to allow the Tran family to remain in community accommodation after the birth of the baby only two nights ago. Let me remind the House again that the department had made a decision to shift this family into accommodation. That happened on 13 April 2005. That is at least six weeks ago. In those circumstances, it is beyond any logic or explanation that the Leader of the Opposition could be up here on his feet saying that this decision was made on the run and that I overruled the minister for immigration. The family came from Christmas Island on 13 April and they came for the very good reason that there were difficult obstetric considerations relating to the pending birth of the child. The child's mother is 39 and they were brought quite properly into this accommodation so they could be near the hospital.

But of course, somehow or other, that is policy on the run. I would have thought it is an exercise in compassion and common-sense, and not the making of policy on the run—

Ms Burke interjecting—

The SPEAKER—The member for Chis-holm!

Mr HOWARD—And I repeat again that this family is here illegally in Australia. Let us, in all of our debate and discussion on these issues bear in mind that, however much people from time to time may be critical of the immigration department, no department is beyond criticism. I am sure the immigration department has made mistakes, which has been acknowledged both by the minister and the current head of the department. But that department is charged with the responsibility of enforcing policies that I had understood enjoyed bipartisan support in this country. It is not a criticism of the immigration department to say that they have been out there trying to make sure that people who have overstayed their visas or are here illegally are dealt with in accordance with the law. And the 201 cases that the minister referred represented, in my view, an attempt by her to be totally open and totally transparent. What she basically did was to go back
through the department’s records and find all the cases where people have been held and then released because it had been concluded that they were not unlawfully held. I think that was the right thing for the minister to do. Some people may have said, ‘Why did she bother?’ The reason she bothered was that she wanted to find out whether, amongst those 201 cases, there were any other examples similar to Alvarez Solon or Rau. That is why she did it: so she would be able to say to the public, ‘I have checked all potential duplications of these two cases and I have come to the conclusion that there are not any.’ That is not something that the minister should be attacked for; that is something the minister should be supported for.

And that is another reason why I am not going to accept this censure moved by the Leader of the Opposition. That is another reason why the Leader of the Opposition has not established a proper case. By all means, let us hold judgment about the performance of the immigration department until we have the results of Palmer in. Let us then have a look at it; let us then have all the facts in our possession and then we can make a judgment. The Leader of the Opposition talks about making policy on the run. I say to the Leader of the Opposition: he is guilty of making censures on the run. The time to attempt to censure me would be the time when the inquiry of Palmer demonstrates a manifest failure—when the inquiry clearly demonstrates that I have been derelict in my duty in continuing to support the minister. I want to say that there are few departments that are more difficult to administer than immigration. I have been served with two outstanding immigration ministers and I will defend both. That is not to say that they are without blame. That is not to say that there cannot be improvements. But let me say, of all the censures I have been subjected to, few have failed as miserably as this one has to even get to the basic threshold of establishing a case against the Prime Minister.

Mr LAURIE FERGUSON (Reid) (3.33 pm)—Last Sunday the Prime Minister gave what might have appeared to be a ringing endorsement of the Minister for Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs. But, in actual fact, it was very conditional. He commented:

Well of course I retain full confidence in the minister and until I have evidence of bad administration or systemic failure I am not going to do other than support the department.

That comment of course was in the context of assurances from the minister that: ‘I am satisfied with the detention system’ and: ‘We’re very happy to have a tremendous immigration system.’ And in case there were any problems we had the assurance: ‘My focus is not on punishing the guilty but fixing the problem’. That was the context of this conditional endorsement by the Prime Minister.

That steam train came to a ringing halt yesterday. We have heard a defence by the Prime Minister—essentially, it was the Lang Hancock defence that you have got to break a few eggs to make an omelette. Apparently, the 200 cases are justified because of the large number of illegal entrants. The first point to make is that this 200 figure is at great variance to the earlier assurances from the minister that there were 0.2 per cent of cases that would ever be involved in this kind of problem. The Prime Minister also managed, by accident I guess, to fail to mention to the House that the department is also concurrently looking at a further 928 cases, which might also have to be referred to the committee. So even if we are for one moment—

Mr Crean interjecting—
The SPEAKER—The member for Hotham has already been warned earlier today.

Mr LAURIE FERGUSON—to accept that 200 is not unreasonable, there are a further 928 cases under investigation. I for one am not reassured by Minister Vanstone’s comment yesterday, when she said:

Every single case will be looked at separately, every one of them, because the department is determined to recognise—

Et cetera. But she then commented that she could assure us that not every one of those 200 would be a case of wrongful detention. What an assurance: not every one of the 200 is a wrongful detention.

What we have here, as I have said, is a situation where at least 200 cases have been referred and they are still looking at nearly 1,000 others. Of course, in that argument from the Prime Minister in defence of the department, himself and the minister, he has been trying to talk about two cases. And possibly it could be argued that, no matter how horrendous they are and no matter what the suffering of the individuals was, that they might have been aberrations—they might have been abnormal.

But let us look at the broader picture before I get to those two central cases that have been commented upon in the media and the parliament. We had a situation in Sydney where a person, and perhaps this is relevant because he was of Chinese extraction, made the mistake of not having his passport on him one day. His partner, apparently, was illegally in the country; he was not. The consequences of this gentleman not having his passport on him one day, but still having three other measures of identification, was for him and his child to be chucked into the detention centre. We had another case involving an Iranian in Western Australia who was detained. In an aspect that is reminiscent of some of the more topical cases he was thrown in the detention centre but then had to be released because, even on a cursory examination of his psychiatric state a few days later, they concluded that he should not have been in there.

We have read the comments of Justice Finn with regard to two detainees at Port Augusta. They did not see psychiatrists until 12 months and 21 months respectively after their detention. The judge concluded that the psychiatric and medical services received by those detainees amounted to culpable neglect. He spoke of a breach of a duty of care to those detainees. They were very unfortunate in the lack of contact and help they received from psychiatric personnel. What was the pattern for most of the others? Until yesterday, seven to nine weeks was roughly the turnaround of attendance by psychiatrists. It is interesting to note that the cases of the people to whom this government did not show a duty of care were even more clearly proven without the judge, because both were transferred to the Glenside medical centre before the case was finalised.

This week, in a Public Works Committee of this parliament, the government could not get one single member of a government majority committee to support the contention that Maribyrnong should be expanded. Essentially the department was putting forward a proposition which meant that the number of people to be thrown in that detention centre, even with the so-called improvements, would lead to mass overcrowding. It is not as though we have had two odd, strange occurrences, horrible though they may be. What we have here is a systemic problem in the department—a culture. I am glad to say that, yesterday, for the first time we had comments by the minister—a minor concession—that the culture would have to change and the department would have to be user-friendly. That is an improvement, and there
were new changes with respect to psychiatric assistance.

Let us return to the two central cases that have put this government in the spotlight. In 2003—not two or three days ago but in 2003—an operational member of the Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs became aware that Vivian Solon had been deported from this country illegally. Contact was made with the Missing Persons Bureau, in Queensland. I believe the government’s defence—let us hope that it is true—is that an officer in the department did not tell anybody else in the immigration department that the department had illegally deported her. I agree with the minister: that is inexplicable. That at least put the problem outside of the minister’s office and onto a low-level person in the department.

In another series of related events, which really do put into perspective the total failure in the management of immigration at the moment, Vivian Solon was given a certificate to say that she was fit to travel, even though she was in a wheelchair and had experienced convulsions two days previously. The Philippines embassy urged Australia not to deport her until she had received medical treatment. Clearly there was knowledge of this in the department and in the minister’s office but there was an attempt to make sure the Australian public did not become aware of it.

Mr Young made many attempts to engender the interest of the department. The situation also involved Interpol. Even when it was ‘all stations ahead’—even when there was supposedly a massive effort on the part of this government—the Interpol office in the Philippines commented that locating this person did not seem to be a high priority of the Australian government. Someone behind me talked about the way the ministers tried to spread the blame. A Catholic priest in the Philippines, Father Duffin, was assailed by the minister because he had seen the person on television but he did not notify anyone for four days—this from a government that runs an immigration department that knew a woman had been illegally deported two years before but did very little.

The minister had the temerity to comment that it was very fortunate that the priest had seen Vivian Solon on television. This is the same minister who runs the department which had deported the person, which knew back in 2001 where she was going in the Philippines and which was supposedly involved in the arrangements at the airport, which failed anyway. The minister now says that it was fortunate that a priest saw her on television. What was the department doing at that time?

The other victim that the government is trying to line up is the Queensland Police Force. We heard this from the Prime Minister. Quite frankly, it is not the Queensland Police Force’s responsibility to find people in the Philippines, where they have no jurisdiction whatsoever. Queensland minister Judy Spence covered those issues very thoroughly yesterday.

There is also Cornelia Rau’s situation. The woman was held under the auspices of the Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs, which tried to say in the early stages that she had been held by the Queensland police when she had been held under the auspices of the immigration department. That is emphatically clear. When we talk about failures and problems of groups outside the immigration department, perhaps the current minister should remember—and the Prime Minister referred to this issue of locating people—that one of the first actions of the minister for immigration, when she was Minister for Justice and Customs in
the new Howard government after 1996, was to scrap Labor’s proposal for a national index of missing people. The Prime Minister talked about the problems of finding people and about the police. I think the minister should bear in mind her contribution to the decision to not move ahead with Labor’s proposal for a national missing person’s index.

Cornelia Rau was held in Red 1 detention—in isolation for significant periods of time. She has made claims of being man-handled. She has said that she was treated like a caged animal. The department refused to take notice of recommendations by psychiatrists that she should receive help. I do not think there is any person in this country who has seen interviews recently, who has read this story and knows about her history before being picked up in Queensland, that would doubt for one moment that she has serious problems. I cannot work out why the contractors and the departmental people at Baxter did not discover that. People in that detention centre who are illiterate could see that her conduct was such that she should be helped—that she should have received assistance—but apparently those who were contracted to provide a service and the department saw no need throughout this whole period.

The other aspect of this is a royal commission. If the departmental officials are not hiding behind privacy, their sole interest in protecting Cornelia, their other argument is about the person running this inquiry. We have never for a moment doubted his integrity or ability. However, he has not been given the powers by the government to accomplish his task. I do not think it is any accident that the person conducting the inquiry into these matters is not given the power to force people to attend, bring documents forward or have employees of the department of immigration self-incriminate or protect people from libel for what they say during these inquiries. As I said, I do not think it is any accident that this man has not been provided with this power. It is also quite clear from what he has said over the last day or so that he cannot finish this task.

We have had comments from this government about this 200 figure that the Prime Minister talked about again. A week ago, he was going to solve it all. The minister kept saying, ‘He will get to the bottom. He will get the facts. Keep calm.’ She told the opposition and the Australian people that everyone should be calm. What we saw yesterday is her own admission of failings in the department. As I said, 200 cases were going to be dealt with by this person—a man who another minister in this government said was ‘away on a short-term posting in another part of the government’. This inquiry was a ‘short-term job’. He said it would not be taking ‘very long’.

In reality, if that is the case, we still have not finalised Rau. Yet the department have already handed over 200 cases. How long would it take them, with any kind of effort, to analyse these cases and finish the whole operation? I would say years, quite frankly. We have seen in the last day or so that Mick Palmer has had to essentially say to the government that he cannot do it.

The time has now come for the government to really bite the bullet on this matter and admit that there are systemic problems in the department that the Prime Minister alluded to as being the base for support for this minister. Recognise that the problems are there. Recognise that in these 200 cases, while there are going to be cases that not many people will quibble over—someone was detained at the airport because they had a problem with their passport—there could be a significant number like the ones that
have been centre stage in the media coverage.

There is a need for a royal commission. There is a need for powers to investigate this matter. Isn’t that all the more the case when we learn of the way in which the Solon matter has been handled by the department and the minister’s office. There has been a culture of cover-up, of not coming forward and admitting to the Australian public how central the problems are. We do not for one moment resile from the need for a detention system in this country to make sure that people are processed and that cases are investigated and to see whether people have health issues. There is one chance in a million or 20 million that someone who comes here by boat is a terrorist. Most of us are aware that that is not the way that these people would come. The Prime Minister’s continued defence of this minister must come to an end. His attempt to pervade these matters with issues of national security evades the essential mistreatment of a significant number of Australians. (Time expired)

Mr McGAURAN (Gippsland—Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs) (3.48 pm)—There is no more serious action a Leader of the Opposition could take against a Prime Minister in this parliament than to move a motion of censure. This should only be done when a prima facie case exists. In his presentation to the parliament today, the Leader of the Opposition has failed even to establish a prima facie, elementary case for censure against the Prime Minister. Most if not all censures, especially against a Prime Minister, are laden with tension. There is a great stirring of the parliament on both sides, but in actual fact this censure has flopped very badly, for the simple reason that members on both sides know that the case is not substantial; it is extraordinarily weak. By moving the censure, the Leader of the Opposition tells the parliament, and therefore the public, more about himself and his standing in the body politic of the Australian Labor Party than about the conduct of the immigration department, the oversight of that department by the Minister for Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs, Senator Vanstone, and the final responsibility of the Prime Minister.

It is a very weak case; in fact, it is no case at all. That is for the simple reason that, when you strip away the banner headlines and the shock element of the reporting in the media of one aspect or another of the Vivian Alvarez and Cornelia Rau stories especially are made known, you really do have a proper government response—a full investigation, utterly transparent and comprehensive. This is a point of difference between the Labor Party and the government—and a legitimate one. The Labor Party believe, as they have cited in their censure against the Prime Minister, in the need for a royal commission, whereas the government believes that the Palmer inquiry is the proper body, headed by the proper person, to inquire into these matters.

The Labor Party cannot have it both ways. On the one hand, the Leader of the Opposition does not doubt Mr Palmer’s credentials or integrity—and how could he?—but, on the other hand, he said at one stage that what is needed is a proper inquiry. The converse of that is that an improper or unsatisfactory inquiry is under way. The member for Reid led on with this argument that you need powers of compulsion and interrogation, power to enforce production of documents and witnesses to attend and so on. If Mr Palmer is as competent and forensic an investigator as the Leader of the Opposition says—and I believe that he is, without a doubt—then we should rely on Mr Palmer alone and on Mr Palmer’s own words. A statement issued last Friday, 20 May, says:
Mr Palmer said the Inquiry had examined a large amount of documentation and spoken to a wide range of people, including DIMIA and staff of detention centre contractor, GSL, advocates and Baxter immigration visitors, detainees, medical practitioners and members of other interest groups and interested parties and had received a high level of support and cooperation.

The Inquiry has been directly assisted by Dr David Chaplow, Head of the NZ Mental Health Service and an internationally recognised and respected psychiatrist, in reaching conclusions in the area of mental health care.

Mr Palmer is not asserting or claiming that his inquiry is restricted, hampered or handicapped. Of course, it is not. Mr Palmer’s needs with regard to time and resources are met by the government upon request. So Mr Palmer is doing the right job entirely with regard to this matter. The government has voluntarily referred to Mr Palmer a further 201 cases whereby persons who were detained were later released, having been found not to have been unlawful. Between early 2000 and 2005, 88,000 persons were detained. Only 201 have been referred to Mr Palmer, which represents 0.2 per cent. I would expect, on my limited knowledge, that a significant percentage of that 201 will not be found to have been detained by fault, incompetence or negligence on the part of DIMIA.

Some of it, I suspect, relates to record keeping. Some cases may be persons detained—usually for a short period; sometimes it can be measured in minutes or hours—who did not provide the full documentation. When immigration officials go to an orchard, a restaurant or a brothel, because the people there do not carry their identity documents with them they are, naturally, detained. It may simply be in the back seat of a vehicle, it may be at a regional office or it may be at a detention centre. Do not assume for a moment that the immigration officials have acted wrongly in all or even a majority of those cases; that is for others to arbitrate on. The point is that those 201 cases represent but 0.2 per cent. I wish it were 100 per cent. We are working to make it 100 per cent, but 99.8 per cent is not far off the mythical 99.9 per cent that everybody, far and wide, regards as the perfection level.

Quite frankly, I am led to understand it was no different in Labor’s years. The member for Reid stood up here, sanctimoniously and self-righteously citing that number as criticism of dedicated immigration officials. It was the same practice—how could it be otherwise because of human nature?—in Labor years. The hypocrisy, deceit and deception of the Labor Party in regard to the generalised abuse and denigration of immigration officials brings shame to the opposition. Immigration officials are dedicated people, doing the very best job under extremely challenging and difficult circumstances, and mistakes are made. Obviously, the Cornelia Rau and Vivian Alvarez cases are the worst examples known to us. We must work to correct them. There are mistakes made by the department of immigration. Is there any department free of human error? Is there any political party free of human error? I could cite the performances and incompetencies of various members of the opposition to substantiate that assertion.

Senator Vanstone moved very quickly after the Cornelia Rau case first appeared. In February this year she listed a whole number of reforms regarding the detention of people without an established identity. A few days ago she announced several more measures, which I am certain the opposition would endorse. We have a detention policy—which the Labor Party introduced and support—and we must administer it with flexibility and compassion. And we do. Where mistakes are made, we have to acknowledge them and improve on them. But to damn a whole department is utterly wrong, and it is a betrayal
of our responsibility as members of parliament not to abuse, for political purposes, public servants who cannot reply on their own part.

In that light, the citing of Dr John Nation, the chief of staff to Senator Amanda Vanstone, was an act of cowardice. I was acting minister when Dr Nation contacted me in regard to the Vivian Alvarez matter, and I can assure members that he was distressed and disturbed, as I was. We wanted to get to the bottom of it immediately. He made extensive attempts to contact Ms Alvarez’s former Australian husband. It was the husband’s request, because there is a teenage son at a critical stage of his schooling, that the matter not be turned into a media circus—with good reason. I read in one national newspaper a report of a neighbour commenting on the morals of Ms Alvarez. That is what happens when you completely unleash some elements of the media. I have raised the issue with a number of journalists: what is the public interest? It was the specific and continual request of the guardian of her son that this not be turned into a public circus whilst attempts were made to locate Ms Alvarez.

I have spoken to journalists about what is in the public interest, and their reply always is that journalists, unlike people in public office, will always move on with reasonable requests. But the point for people like Ms Alvarez’s former husband and son is that they still have to live in a street, they still have to live in a community and they still have to go to a school or workplace. The media taking the high moral ground on this issue raises fundamental questions of public interest concerning the person involved. Dr Nation is a very dedicated and conscientious individual and I can assure the House that he acted entirely properly at all times in regard to this matter.

Senator Vanstone has moved to make major improvements with the full support and assistance of the department of immigration. In February she announced: firstly, a 28-day limit in all but exceptional circumstances on the time immigration detainees can be held in prison; secondly, the fingerprinting of people detained so that one can better establish identity; and, thirdly, that further advice was now given to staff clarifying and strengthening the procedures needing to be followed to establish a person’s identity.

The member for Reid would lay all of the disturbing issues surrounding Rau and Alvarez at the feet of immigration. Let me tell the member for Reid that, even on what is known on the public record, this is an issue about mental health; it is an issue about a number of state agencies as well as immigration and detention.

Mr Albanese interjecting—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. IR Causley)—Order! The member for Grayndler has been warned in this parliament.

Mr McGAURAN—It is dishonest for the member for Reid to reduce these complex and complicated situations to an issue of immigration alone. My own view is that the issue of mental health will play a very prominent part in further inquiries regarding the diagnosis, treatment and handling of the people involved.

Senator Vanstone has recently made further changes, particularly to the cultural aspects of the Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs. She has moved swiftly. There is this notion that you can have a royal commission, but for how much—$10 million, $20 million, $30 million? No, make it $50 million. Who has ever seen a royal commission come in under multiple millions of dollars? It is a lawyer’s picnic and it is slow. It will take years and
there will be challenges in the courts. Mr Palmer has full access to the documents, the witnesses and the personnel that he needs and seeks or he would tell us otherwise.

The opposition tries to walk both sides of the street on this: on the one hand, Palmer is handicapped; on the other hand, he has made no complaint yet he is a person of great integrity. It is like detention. Labor had 600 children in detention and you had a blind eye to the issue then. We have no children in detention who came by way of asylum boats. We have policies of outside detention for families—for women and children. Labor never had outside accommodation or housing projects. Labor used the policy of detention harshly, underpinned by the policy objectives of deterring people smugglers and properly identifying persons who had arrived unlawfully. We strive to do it right—and we largely do—and we strive to improve it. We strive to improve our performance in community services, in health, in ageing and in every aspect of government administration. Immigration is no different. We can do better and we will do better. We are moving forward, with major reforms already announced and more to come as the Palmer inquiry makes recommendations.

The Minister for Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs, Senator Vanstone, has acted swiftly. She is not hog-tied to a royal commission that would be bound up in legal procedure, expensive and slow, for a very long time. She has acted properly and competently in this matter. The simple fact is that Australia has a robust migration system; it has been instrumental in protecting our borders and it maintains the integrity of our asylum and refugee program, which is amongst the world’s best. We can be proud of it, as it delivers a world-class skilled migration program. The Labor Party’s censure has fallen flat on its face because the points of difference and disagreement are not substantial and Labor’s record in office reveals them to be utter hypocrites on this matter.

Question put:
That the motion (Mr Beazley’s) be agreed to.
The House divided. [4.07 pm]
(The Deputy Speaker—Hon. IR Causley)

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AYES

Adams, DGH
Beazley, KC
Bird, S
Burke, AE
Byrne, AM
Crean, SF
Edwards, GJ
Ellis, AL
Emerson, CA
Ferguson, MJ
Garrett, P
George, J
Gillard, JE
Griffin, AP
Hatton, MJ
Irwin, J
Kerr, DJC
Lawrence, CM
Macklin, JL
McMullan, RF
Murphy, JP
O’Connor, GM
Plibersek, T
Quick, HV
Rudd, KM
Sercombe, RCG
Swan, WM
Thomson, KJ
Wilkie, K

NOES

Abbott, AJ
Andrews, KJ
Baird, BG
Baldwin, RC
Bartlett, KJ
Bishop, JI

Albanese, AN
Bevis, AR
Bowen, C
Burke, AS
Corcoran, AK
Danby, M *
Elliot, J
Ellis, K
Ferguson, LDT
Fitgibbon, JA
Georganas, S
Gibbons, SW
Grierson, SJ
Hall, JG *
Hayes, CP
Jenkins, HA
King, CF
Livermore, KF
McClelland, RB
Melham, D
O’Connor, BP
Owens, J
Price, LRS
Ripoll, BF
Sawford, RW
Smith, SF
Tanner, L
Vamvakinou, M

Anderson, JD
Bailey, FE
Baker, M
Barresi, PA
Bishop, BK
Broadbent, R
Mr Howard—Mr Speaker, I ask that further questions be placed on the Notice Paper.

BUSINESS

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. IR Causley) (4.12 pm)—I understand that it has been agreed that the matter of public importance appearing on the Notice Paper will not be pursued.

DOCUMENTS

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Leader of the House) (4.12 pm)—Documents are presented as listed in the schedule circulated to honourable members. Details of the documents will be recorded in the Votes and Proceedings.

PERSONAL EXPLANATIONS

Miss JACKIE KELLY (Lindsay) (4.12 pm)—Mr Deputy Speaker, I wish to make a personal explanation.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. IR Causley)—Does the honourable member claim to have been misrepresented?

Miss JACKIE KELLY—Yes.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER—Please proceed.

Miss JACKIE KELLY—Just before question time, with her inimitable sneer, the member for Fowler stated that I was late for question time again. In fact, I was in the chamber before the Leader of the Opposition opened his mouth for the first question. I understand the member for Fowler has made other comments and I will check the Hansard and get back to you.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER—The member for Lindsay has made it clear.

APPROPRIATION BILL (No. 1) 2005-2006

Cognate bills:

APPROPRIATION BILL (No. 2) 2005-2006

APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENTARY DEPARTMENTS) BILL (No. 1) 2005-2006

APPROPRIATION BILL (No. 5) 2004-2005

APPROPRIATION BILL (No. 6) 2004-2005

Second Reading

Debate resumed.

Mrs IRWIN (Fowler) (4.13 pm)—The member for Lindsay must be very precious. As I was saying before question time, I wonder whether the member for Lindsay would
be happy to table her superannuation surcharge notice, as I am prepared to do. I very much doubt that she would. Then there is the Treasurer. In his first ever budget speech back in 1996, the Treasurer told the House:

A major deficiency of the current system is that tax benefits for superannuation are overwhelmingly biased in favour of high income earners.

He went on to give the detail of the superannuation surcharge, which he described as the remedy for the bias. The reason for the bias, however, was not that the previous Labor government had left open this loophole for high-income earners but because Labor had another plan, a plan that the Treasurer had already scrapped.

Labor’s plan was to increase compulsory contributions to superannuation from the present nine per cent to 15 per cent, which is a figure closer to the amount that experts suggest is necessary to provide Australians with an adequate retirement income. Of that additional six per cent, three per cent would come from employees and three per cent would come from a government co-contribution. That three per cent co-contribution was the l-a-w law tax cut promised in 1993. As was urged at that time by just about every economics commentator, that tax cut needed to go to boost our nation’s savings. The Treasurer has been known to ask what happened to the l-a-w law tax cut when, as we know, he was the one who pocketed it. That tax cut co-contribution was to have been means tested so that high-income earners would not get it. That is why Labor did not have a superannuation surcharge: entitling low- and middle-income earners to the superannuation co-contribution would have made the situation fairer.

With the removal of the surcharge, we are now back where we started. The system, as the Treasurer said in 1996, is biased in favour of high-income earners. That three per cent government co-contribution would now be worth $26 a week for someone on the median wage of $45,000 a year—not $6 a week but $26 a week. Low- and middle-income earners are missing out both ways. Their l-a-w law tax cut has gone to the rich. Their retirement incomes will not be enough to give them a comfortable retirement. So much for the Treasurer’s concern for fairness in the taxation of superannuation, and so much for his concern for the ageing of our population.

I now turn to those parts of the budget that really are grossly unjust. There is the big stick that the government is applying to sole parents and the disabled; these are the unkindest cuts of all. As I said before question time, the tax cut that I get from this budget is greater than the total weekly income of a sole parent or a person on a disability pension. This heartless government is cutting the rates of pension for some by up to $40 a week.

The 2005 budget gives us all a closer look at the ‘light on the hill’, the great objective of our working class heroes: the Prime Minister and the Treasurer! Their light on the hill is, for some, a return to the workhouse and a lifetime of wage slavery. It is timely to look back to the original light on the hill, because not since before the time of Ben Chifley have the most disadvantaged Australians faced such insecurity.

Like many other Australians, I think it is timely to ask: how did we reach the point where the mass of the population envies sole parents and the sufferers of disabilities? It is timely to ask why the great mass of working people do not envy those high-income earners to whom the Treasurer wants to give an $86 a week tax cut, when workers get a measly $6 a week. When did the whole world turn upside down and when was the clock turned back 150 years? When was Ben
Chifley’s vision of a better standard of living and greater happiness for the mass of the people replaced by the ‘work until you drop’ ethic of the Treasurer? It was not always the case.

There was a time when Australians offered a helping hand to those less fortunate. There was a time when the widowed and disabled were not envied but comforted. There was a time somewhere between the workhouse and the Treasurer’s ‘work until you drop’ command when those less fortunate were treated decently. Looking at the history of that time, you will see that it was always Labor that championed the causes of those less fortunate and it was always the Liberals who fought against those changes. Now, once again, the Liberals are intent on turning back the clock to those dark days. They care nothing for the situation of others, they take comfort in their own good fortune and they feather their own nests at the expense of those less fortunate than themselves.

The history of payments to sole parents goes back to the time of that great Labor figure Jack Lang. As a former Premier and Treasurer of New South Wales, Lang introduced the widows pension in the face of strong opposition from the conservative side of politics. One opposition member even went to the length of suggesting that paying a pension to widows would lead to immorality; they would not accept offers of marriage if it meant the loss of their pension. That is the kind of logic you often find on the conservative side of politics. But that is not half as strange as the idea that we envy sole parents and people with disabilities, which is how the government’s logic runs in this debate.

Jack Lang knew of the struggle faced by sole parents. He had witnessed the struggle of his own mother in raising a young family. He was determined to make sure that other mothers did not face that struggle. But Lang was also aware of the strange envy that some people feel when seeing less fortunate people being given assistance. In his book I Remember, Jack Lang relates what things were like before he introduced the widows pension. In a chapter with the title ‘The widow’s mangle’, Lang recalls a legend of corruption on the Sydney city council. When a council employee died it became traditional that his widow was given a barrow licence. This cost the council nothing but entitled the widow to sublet the licence and receive a small income. The council could only issue so many licences, so the council decided to offer widows the opportunity to earn a living by taking in washing. To help the widow set up her laundry, the council took up a collection and presented the widow with a new mangle. I might need to explain that in those days, before washing machines, a mangle was a hand-operated wringer which was very useful in washing clothes. As Lang tells the story, it happened that the wife of one of the council aldermen came home to find a new mangle which the alderman was to present to a recently bereaved widow in his ward. The alderman’s wife complained that as the wife of an alderman, and a very important person, she should have the new mangle and the widow should be satisfied with her old second-hand mangle.

You might be surprised at how the wife of the alderman could have been envious of the widow, but that is not much different from the situation that we see here today with this government. We have a government that thinks that sole parents do not deserve to live on the luxury of $238 a week and that members of parliaments, as I explained to the House before question time, are entitled to tax cuts of $250 a week. The Treasurer thinks that sole parents should be made to work by cutting their benefit by $22 a week,
or people with disabilities should have their benefit cut by $40 a week, while partnered parents in single high household incomes are paid family tax benefit part B. Single mums and people with disabilities must go to work while married mums get paid to stay at home, to play tennis or to go to the gym.

What kind of society have we become? It is certainly not the kind of society that real working-class heroes like Ben Chifley or Jack Lang would want to be part of. The $6 in your pocket that this Treasurer offers is not much different to the extra sixpence in somebody’s pocket that Chifley rejected. When I ask if this budget will make someone more comfortable, give some father or mother a greater feeling of security for their children, or bring better standards of living or greater happiness to the mass of the people, the answer is obviously, ‘No, it will not.’ For that reason this budget should be rejected. I seek leave to table a copy of my advice about surcharge on 2002-03 superannuation contributions.

Leave granted.

Mr CIOBO (Moncrieff) (4.25 pm)—I am very pleased to rise in the chamber to speak to the government’s Appropriation Bill (No. 1) 2005-2006 and related bills. I note the hour is late, with only about four minutes remaining for debate today. So I might limit my remarks to responding to some of the ludicrous suggestions that the member for Fowler put forward in this debate. I have got to say at the outset that I think one of the greatest shames is the fact that the member for Fowler should be so filled with bile and revulsion about what Australian society is like today. At a time when Australians have contributed record amounts to helping the underprivileged and to ensure that the survivors of, for example, the tsunami are able to make a new start in their lives, the member for Fowler would come into this chamber and spew forth venom of a kind that is basically unprecedented. It is typical of the Australian Labor Party to come into this chamber with their black armband view of history and decry all members of the Australian public as nothing but a self-centred lot.

I say to you, the member for Fowler: you should feel ashamed of the example that you would set as a member of the House of Representatives. You should feel ashamed—

The SPEAKER—Order! The member will not use the word ‘you’.

Mr CIOBO—Sorry, Mr Speaker. The member for Fowler should feel ashamed for coming into this chamber and portraying Australians as self-centred and only concerned with looking after their own pockets. This was a very good budget for the people of Australia, first and foremost because at its core it ensured that we are in a position to continue financing Australia’s future. We were able to continue making sure that all Australians could enjoy the increased benefit that flows from—and I name one specific economic example—an additional $5 billion or $6 billion being made available to invest in schools, hospitals and public infrastructure because we are no longer paying off $96 billion of Australian Labor Party debt.

Despite the fact that the Australian Labor Party come into this chamber and claim that if only they were in government all Australians would be so much better off, let us never forget their track record. When it comes to the actual apportionment of the surplus and when it comes to the fact that this government last evening was able to promote $21.7 billion worth of tax cuts—that is taxpayers’ money remaining in taxpayers’ pockets—let us not lose sight of the fact that, if it were the Australian Labor Party still in power, we would not be talking about the apportionment of a surplus; we would be talking about a budget deficit. We know the
Australian Labor Party’s record was to leave a budget deficit that was unparalleled in Australia’s history. The Australian people will never forget that record.

I am also pleased to say that the Howard government have been able to ensure that we have got inflation down to record lows, interest rates down to record lows and, most importantly, unemployment down to record lows. The member for Fowler said Australians have never faced more uncertainty in their lives. Let me remind the member for Fowler of 1992 and the recession we had to have, and your government’s philosophy of putting one million Australians onto the scrap heap of unemployment. That is the record of the Australian Labor Party. One thing that I am particularly proud of in this budget is the fact that the Howard government and, importantly, the Treasurer Peter Costello were able to provide a new technical college for the Gold Coast. But given the time I would like to conclude my comments there to facilitate the operation of the House.

I seek leave to continue my comments in due course.

Leave granted.

BUSINESS

Days and Hours of Meeting

Mr BARTLETT (Macquarie) (4.29 pm)—by leave—I would like to advise the House of extended sitting times on Monday and Tuesday of next week. The House will sit through on Monday and Tuesday night until 11 pm, with the adjournment debate from 10.30 pm.

ADJOURNMENT

The SPEAKER—Order! It being 4.30 pm, I propose the question:

That the House do now adjourn.

Whaling

Ms GEORGE (Throsby) (4.30 pm)—I recall, as many others would, the huge commitment by Australians to the Save the Whales campaigns. These campaigns around the world promoted the call for a moratorium on commercial whaling and for the creation of whale sanctuaries. Australians were increasingly appalled that whales were being slaughtered for economic gain, as a result of which, as we know, several species were brought to the brink of extinction. I saw a report that an estimated 66,000 whales were slaughtered in 1961 alone. To its credit, Australia enacted a Whale Protection Act in 1980 and in 1991 declared Antarctic waters as a sanctuary. It is only now, as a result of these actions, that we are seeing the recovery of some of the depleted whale populations. Southern right and humpback whales are becoming an ecotourism highlight as they migrate in growing numbers from the Antarctic to our warmer coastal waters to breed.

However, I regret to say that this pleasure that many of us enjoy is very much at risk. Using loopholes in the international convention—the so-called scientific whaling exemption—Japan has been killing 400 minke whales annually in the Antarctic, despite it being a declared whale sanctuary. Now the Japanese want to expand their Antarctic hunt, doubling the annual limit of the Antarctic minke whale kill. Even more worrying is Japan’s plan to resume whaling of threatened populations of fin and humpback whales. This slaughter is proposed for Australia’s Antarctic waters. It is absolutely appalling. It is a serious threat to the humpback whale—the species most frequently seen off the coast and the one that occasionally strays into Sydney Harbour, much to the delight of all who witness them.

As I say, Japan and other countries have been exploiting a loophole in the international convention that allows for so-called scientific whaling. Commercial whaling is conducted by Japan under this guise. I note even the environment minister acknowledges
that, under this rule, sales of whale meat produced by so-called scientific whaling amount to more than $60 million a year. The problem is that Japan has encouraged mendicant countries, some of whom are completely landlocked, with no direct interest in whaling, to join the International Whaling Commission. It is getting to the worrying stage that a majority of nations represented on the commission might indeed vote with Japan to weaken conservation measures as the first step in dismantling the moratorium on commercial exploitation of whales.

The Howard government must act. It must do more than just send a letter and rely on diplomatic measures. The Australian community expects that the government should, firstly, take all legal steps to enforce Australian laws which created the sanctuary in the Southern Ocean and make it an offence to kill or injure whales in Australian waters. Secondly, the government should challenge the legality of Japan’s abuse of the scientific research exemption by taking a case to the International Court of Justice if this becomes necessary. I want to end by quoting from a recent article on this issue, which left me—and I think it will leave you also—with a chilling impression of what the future may hold. It says:

With the anticipation of a considerable liberalisation, harpoons are being loaded up, the explosives set for detonation deep in the insides of the whale, condemning the animal to an agonising death. No longer the rolling and gambolling, the hissing plumes of spray and the creaking underwater grunts. Just the grey, listless lumps of flesh and blubber dragged in a production line into the holds of factory ships.

It is time to act decisively on an issue of great concern to the Australian community.

Riverina Electorate: Drought

Mrs HULL (Riverina) (4.34 pm)—I rise in the House today to pay tribute to the many farmers, producers and businesses small, medium and large right across my electorate of Riverina for the way in which they have been able to manage their circumstances in this ongoing and devastating drought—the worst drought, I believe, in 100 years. Last Friday I had the privilege of having the Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister visit the electorate of Parkes. They took time out to speak with 20 of my constituents across a wide variety of farming enterprises to understand clearly how this dreadful drought was affecting our farmers and particularly the business houses in the small rural communities, which are absolutely reliant on the land and the farmers, and the businesses in larger communities, which also rely on farmers coming in and spending money. The Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister gave much time in listening to the concerns of those farmers.

I was very proud of all those people. They were not emotional and they did not just cry poor mouth and demand from this government an easy result; they were controlled and articulated all of their concerns in the most dignified way in the most devastating of circumstances. I really do pay tribute and give credit to them. I would also like to thank the rural counselling services in my electorate, particularly Peter Gerard-Smith, Bill Thompson and Tony Payton. These people go above and beyond the call of duty to ensure that they are providing much needed advice and services to those people who have been almost crippled by the issues and the decisions that they have had to make in this devastating drought. They are working well beyond their resourced areas. There are many ways in which the government, I am sure, can assist our struggling farmers, businesses and families in the Riverina. I am sure that they will come up with some very valuable measures to assist people in these dramatic circumstances and I am hopeful that that will be very soon.
Some of those things should move towards having a commonality in EC declarations rather than having four separate criteria across four separate RLPBs, such as I have in my electorate—Narrandera A, B, C and D—which all have different criteria. I am hopeful that those issues will be resolved. There are also issues of ensuring that our rural counselling services are resourced more adequately to focus on the issue at hand. I do not believe it was ever considered that they would have to cope with a problem of this magnitude when the rural counselling services were set up. There is also the issue of assistance not only for our farming businesses but for our businesses coping in small rural communities who rely on those farms.

Those farming and business families deserve to have the sympathy of all Australians, particularly the people in this House, for the way they manage. Many times they are criticised for seeking handouts to assist them out of troubled times. But this is not an issue of poor management. Nobody could have managed for the circumstances that are occurring in these very difficult times. The best managers are still very much in the farming business. We saw the drought in the early eighties clear out many of our good farmers. I applaud my farmers and I am hopeful of keeping every single one of them operational in my electorate of Riverina by having assistance from this government, which has come to their rescue in their plight many times before. We need this rescue package at this time. I implore the government to recognise the dignity with which the farmers in my electorate stand. They only seek to have that assistance that will provide Australians with future economic benefits.

Whaling

Mrs ELLIOT (Richmond) (4.39 pm)—I rise today to raise my community’s objections to the slaughter of whales in Australian waters. This is a major issue within my community. Many people have approached me about this over the last weeks and months. On Monday I launched a petition demanding that whaling activity be stopped within Australian territorial waters; that immediate steps be taken to prosecute boats detected slaughtering whales within Australian territorial waters; that the foreign minister apply diplomatic pressure to Japan to stop it from expanding its whale killing activity; that the Howard government immediately convey Australia’s opposition to the expansion of whale killing to all members of the International Whaling Commission; and that the Howard government reaffirm its commitment to establishing a South Pacific whale sanctuary.

I am happy to say that, since launching the petition, it has received overwhelming community support. Right across the community there are so many people who are very passionately concerned about this. The people of my electorate want the Prime Minister to know that whaling is unacceptable in Australian waters. As a nation, we cannot stand by and allow these precious and defenceless animals to be slaughtered. I launched this petition to give my community the opportunity to let the government know that whaling in Australian waters is just not on.

The Prime Minister says that he is concerned. If he is genuinely concerned about Japanese whaling, it is time he steps up to the plate. The community is demanding decisive action from the government on this issue. The community want to see results now. The government should be standing up for Australian interests, not pandering to the Japanese. I do not believe that the Prime Minister is doing everything in his power to stop the slaughter of whales in Australian waters. The government sits on the sidelines of the International Whaling Commission while Japan actively encourages more pro-
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whaling nations to join. Let us make this very clear: the government’s negligence in its role on the IWC has in fact allowed Japan to be in a position to potentially increase its commercial whaling quota.

By not taking firm and concrete action against Japanese whaling, the government has not only put rare and precious whales at risk; it is also risking the livelihoods of ecotourism operators in my electorate—operators such as Romano Del Bianco, who runs Tweed Spirit of the Bay whale watching tours. In Tweed alone, 13,000 people went on whale watching tours last year, a 12 per cent increase. That is a huge amount of people in this area. There is a similar situation in the southern section of my electorate, in Byron Bay. Grant Hawkins from Tourism Byron tells me:

Eco-tourism like whale watching is a growing and very important part of Byron’s future.

I hear stories like this from tourism operators throughout my electorate, from Tweed down to Byron Bay. There are so many people involved in this industry who have such a deep concern for these very defenceless animals.

It has taken 40 years for the whale population to recover. If Japan is successful, the population may be set back to a point from which it may never recover. If there are no whales to see, the government can kiss goodbye this growing $300 million industry and the jobs it provides. That will be the harsh reality if the Japanese are allowed to increase this whaling. It is my job as their representative in this place to stand up for the future of this vitally important local industry. More whales are migrating through Australian waters than we have seen in decades. The government is being both environmentally and economically irresponsible to put these whales at risk. The Prime Minister must stand up for Australia’s interests and put an immediate stop to the slaughter of whales in our waters. That is why I launched this petition and that is why my community has responded to it overwhelmingly. It is such an important issue.

Resources Exploration

Mr HAASE (Kalgoorlie) (4.45 pm)—I rise this evening to address the issue of flowthrough shares for junior explorers. As a member of the Standing Committee on Industry and Resources, I played a very active part in the 2003 inquiry into impediments to increasing investment in minerals and petroleum exploration in Australia and in the report published, *Exploring: Australia’s future*. A flowthrough share scheme is the most effective and immediate process to increase investment in greenfield exploration and to increase the chance of discovering new resources of major economic significance. This is a position held by industry and one that I staunchly support. To suggest that I have ‘backflipped’, as printed by an erroneous and irresponsible section of local media, is an absolute nonsense. It is not only nonsense but it is erroneous and meddlesome. It is also an insult to the mining and exploration industry of the goldfields and in Western Australia generally, because such journals rely on the support of a population that is in turn supported by that industry.

I support the introduction of flowthrough shares. However, the unknown factor is whether or not such a share scheme will ever be approved by Treasury. My concern is that the mining and exploration industry players, quite properly and with the best of intentions, have after extensive consultation united their voices and focused on the most commonly agreed panacea, flowthrough shares. The concept, refined in Canada, has been presented to four federal parliaments and two federal ministers over nearly a decade without success. I fear that the call has become too practised, the response from
Treasury too rehearsed and the rejection by cabinet too easy, especially in an environment where there is now a perception held by an ill-informed public that the whole industry is on a roll and that the huge contribution to the economy will go on forever.

I believe that to ensure a future strike comparable with the Golden Mile or Mount Isa more incentives need to be given to investors. Without flowthrough shares, Australia in 25 years may be left with only Olympic Dam operating as a base metals source. It is not generally understood that the process from strike to revenue creation is complex and may take more than a decade. It will be too late for Treasury to start bleating when the revenue stream has dried up. I have personally committed to convening a meeting between senior industry representatives, ministerial advisors, the minister and Treasury officers in an effort to resolve the impasse. Minister Macfarlane is already well informed on the issue, but I believe the call has become almost a mantra. With the process of the next budget commencing before the end of the year, some circuit-breaker is required.

Flowthrough shares allow an investor in a company to claim a deduction for such an investment, rather than the company that is being invested in being able to claim expenditure on exploration as a deduction. The reason for this change is that most of the junior explorers have no revenue, no income, against which to offset their expenditure on exploration.

The time to secure certainty of ongoing revenue for the nation and future sustainability for the mining and exploration industry in Australia is now. I will continue to pursue a positive outcome for the industry by facilitating discussion and speaking out in support of this matter at every opportunity, as I have done untiringly in the past. I wish to applaud the recent actions of both the Western Australian Chamber of Minerals and Energy and APIA in arranging and facilitating a visit by me and colleagues to the Pilbara and Kimberley regions, where we were able to inspect first hand and understand the incredible resource developments that are taking place in that part of my electorate. The efforts that those two peak industry bodies were able to afford us and the hospitality provided to us by the major companies involved—for instance, Woodside, Rio Tinto and BHP Billiton—were incredible, to say the least. It is much appreciated because it helps me in my cause by better informing my colleagues of the importance of the industry. (Time expired)

**Whaling**

Mr GARRETT (Kingsford Smith) (4.49 pm)—I rise to speak about the Japanese government continuing to perpetuate the sham of scientific whaling in Australian waters. This has resulted in the slaughter of some 400 whales. Weep, fellow Australians, for the fate of these beautiful creatures. For those of us like me who have been connected with this issue for over 25 years, weep when you know that your government is not doing enough. Weep when you recognise that we now have a new consciousness about living in harmony and balance with creatures like the whales. There are some who would smile at this and yet, by the weight of emails that I am receiving in my office—and I am sure it is the same for my other colleagues in the House—it seems that most if not all Australians are horrified at the thought that these animals—innocent, creative, gentle, intelligent and, incidentally, great singers in the animal kingdom—are being murdered in this way. It really is time for the government to act.

I put it to the Prime Minister in question time that we ought to consider a case to the International Court of Justice. It is clear from
the 52nd annual meeting of the International Whaling Commission held in Adelaide from 3 July to 7 July 2000 that, in fact, there would be legal grounds for taking that case. The response of the Prime Minister and the government has been to let diplomacy have its way. Frankly, that is not good enough. Diplomacy will not deliver salvation to these whales. As we speak in the House this evening, it is very clear from Japan’s response that Japan has no intention of stopping killing whales. Japan has every intention of maintaining a sham about scientific whaling and, in fact, increasing the cull. There are plans to begin killing humpback whales and fin whales, and an increasing number of minke whales will be killed even though they are in Australia’s Antarctic whale refuge.

The new understanding and consciousness that we have about taking care of creatures like the whales puts the onus on the government to act resolutely on this issue. But what have they done? The shadow minister for the environment has released a statement about the Minister for the Environment and Heritage’s comments when he called on the states of Australia to take action. With respect, I think that the minister for the environment is missing the point. Whales in Australian waters are protected under federal legislation. It is the responsibility of the federal minister for the environment to make sure that that legislation is observed and, if it is not observed, to take action and to follow up on those breaches which are clearly taking place in Australian waters and are being undertaken by the Japanese.

I noticed, when I was reading through my press clippings, that Brazilian members of parliament have quit over logging rape, concerned at the failure of the government of Brazil to prevent the near record rise in the destruction of the Amazon rainforest. There are icon issues of the environment in the world. Protection of the whales and protection of the Brazilian rainforest are two of those icon issues. I call upon members opposite to consider whether they would be prepared to follow the brave actions of Brazilian members of parliament if they have concern about the protection of these creatures.

The claim is made that it will be diplomatic pressure—diplomatic niceties—that will bring Japan to reason, but it is very, very clear from what the Japanese have said, from what they have done in the past, from their actions in the International Whaling Commission and from their public statements that they will continue to kill those whales. It is not good enough. It is time for the Howard government to stop the killing of whales in Australian waters. It is time for them to prosecute, under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act, any boats that are conducting those activities. It is time for them to reaffirm their commitment to a South Pacific whale sanctuary. It is time for them to recognise that the actions they have taken so far have not been sufficient. It is time for the Howard government to save Australian whales.

Mr Robert Bruce Duncan

Mr Farmer (Macarthur—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Education, Science and Training) (4.54 pm)—I rise this afternoon to pay tribute to Robert Bruce Duncan, better known as Bruce. Bruce was a former local member for Lismore in the New South Wales state parliament. He passed away on 7 May 2005, aged 76, after a battle with cancer. He was a cousin of Margaret Shafer, who is a lady in my electorate and a very close friend of mine. Margaret Shafer is a woman who contributes greatly to the community of Macarthur, and this is obviously a quality that her family members share.

Bruce was born in Lismore in 1929 and attended Lismore High School. As a young
man, he ran a dairy farm at Koonorigan which was formerly run by his parents. In 1965 he won the seat of Lismore and held it for 23 years until 1988. He served as shadow minister for education, public works and ports. Bruce fought hard for the North Coast dairy industry, particularly in his efforts to gain access to the Sydney milk market. Bruce was involved with the Westpac surf lifesaving helicopter service since its inception in 1982 and was appointed chairman of the board in 1992, serving until 1998. In 2001 he was appointed a life member.

Bruce’s legacy lives on in the community, particularly through the surf rescue helicopter service. He was a community-minded person and he was very well respected by everybody in his community and beyond. The local newspaper described his passing as ‘losing a favourite son’. I could not agree more. I want to use this opportunity to extend my condolences to his wife, Marlene, and his two sons, Peter and Ian, and their families.

I would like to end with a quote from William Penn which I feel is very appropriate to Bruce’s life. It is:

I expect to pass through life but once. If therefore, there be any kindness I can show, or any good thing I can do to any fellow being, let me do it now, and not defer or neglect it, as I shall not pass this way again.

Bruce lived his life spreading kindness and love to all those he met. This world is now a sadder place for his loss, and we can only hope that the people he has touched in his life may be inspired by the things that he has done with his life, and go on to help others in his name.

Legal Profession

Mr Murphy (Lowe) (4.57 pm)—I would like to bring to the attention of the Treasurer and the Assistant Treasurer the replies that I received from the Assistant Treasurer this week in relation to question Nos 3, 5, 13 and 14 on the Notice Paper. You will doubtless recall my long campaign over the last 3½ years to bring to account those members of the legal profession who fail to comply with the law. You will remember when Paul Barry wrote those celebrated articles in 2001 in relation to those barristers and solicitors who were rorting the taxation system and using family law and bankruptcy to avoid their taxation obligations. Arising from that, many members of the legal profession were exposed for not even having their returns lodged on time.

I have been pursuing this issue for 3½ years. Mr Barry raised it 12 months before I first raised it in the parliament, because little was being done. Yet, as of the financial year 2002-03, 36 per cent of barristers and 28 per cent of solicitors were still not up to date with their tax returns and, most alarmingly, 26 members of the judiciary—that is, judges and magistrates—were not up to date with their tax returns. I ask: what sort of message is that sending to the public? At a time when the government are offering lower- and middle-income earners only $6 in tax relief, clearly the government are not doing enough to support the taxation commissioner in cracking down on those dishonest members of the legal profession who have done nothing about their returns.

I have pursued this issue with follow-up questions, and I will continue to pursue it, because members of the legal profession and members of the judiciary, more than anyone, should be meeting their taxation obligations. This is a very serious matter. It goes to the heart of the public interest because it is all about protecting revenue. Those members of the legal profession should be honouring those obligations, and the Treasurer and the Assistant Treasurer should be doing much more to see that that matter is addressed.
The SPEAKER—Order! It being 5 pm, the debate is interrupted.

House adjourned at 5.00 pm

NOTICES

The following notice was given:

MR MCGAURAN to move:

That standing orders 31 (automatic adjournment of the House) and 33 (limit on business after 9.30 pm) be suspended for the sitting on Monday, 30 May and Tuesday, 31 May 2005.
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The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. IR Causley) took the chair at 9.40 am

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Member for Parkes

Mr KELVIN THOMSON (Wills) (9.40 am)—Broken Hill has made an outstanding contribution to the economic development of our nation. Royalties from its silver, lead and zinc based metals essentially underwrote much of Australia’s industrial development in the 20th century, particularly through BHP Ltd and, later, the Collins House Group, which had interests throughout Australia in mining, minerals processing, metal refining, pulp and paper production, and aircraft manufacturing, to name just a few. For years Broken Hill ran its own hospital and ambulance service which, along with the upkeep of Penrose Park, were largely funded by voluntary contributions from the wages of local miners.

How sad it is, then, that Broken Hill should be now be represented by a member who has nothing but contempt for it and its achievements. On 17 February, when addressing the Canberra Bush Capital Club, the member for Parkes said:

... in some parts of my electorate there is no leadership.

He complained that:

Broken Hill has no leadership in its Council and a negative mentality in all 20,000 people, who have a handout mentality.

The mines had always been there to provide them with swimming pools. Now when they want something, they come to us.

These comments are an absolute disgrace. Far from being endowed with a handout mentality, most Hillites are toilers in the real sense of the word. The member for Parkes should immediately apologise to the people of Broken Hill. As if that statement were not bad enough, the member for Parkes told the same meeting that in his capacity as parliamentary secretary for regional development he had approved a grant under the Regional Partnerships program. He said he had just approved ‘something in a country town’—he could not remember where it was; in fact, it was the Orange Regional Conservatorium—but it would mean:

... the odd opera or play could be put on in the town and that would make the doctors’ wives happy.

Let me tell the parliament that making doctors’ wives happy is not one of the Regional Partnerships guidelines. Given this kind of statement, taxpayers are entitled to have very little confidence indeed that their money will not continue to be wasted under the Regional Partnerships program. The Orange conservatorium project is a worthy project that deserves better than this kind of contempt. Indeed, the subsequent announcement of a $600,000 Regional Partnerships grant completely failed to mention the fact that the money would be dependent on matching contributions from the funding sources which, unlike this government, have kept the conservatorium afloat in the city of Orange for many years. At stake is a critical part of the conservatorium’s operations, including leading-edge early childhood development classrooms. Having not contributed a brass farthing to the conservatorium’s success to date, the Howard government should be coming to the table in catch-up mode as a very late funding partner—(Time expired)
Banks

Mrs MAY (McPherson) (9.43 am)—The major banks’ latest money grab reconfirms the public’s perception that the banks have a bottomless appetite and drive for massive profits and will stop at nothing to find ways to squeeze every cent out of their customers. A number of the major banks have invented a new scheme to improve their bottom line by charging for internet banking. These new charges come after the banks have uncompromisingly pushed technology onto their customers and left customers with little option but to take up technology. This push has gone on for years and at a high cost. We have seen branches close and thousands of employees retrenched, resulting in fewer options for customers, inferior service and an increase in fees.

Bank fees comprise approximately half of the major banks’ massive profits, and I would be interested to hear of any other industry where this happens because it seems to be one of the greatest con jobs of the 20th and 21st centuries. For instance, fees charged to households by the banks were over $1 billion in 1997 and increased by 162 per cent to $3 billion in 2003. Fees on businesses increased by 96 per cent from $2.88 billion to $5.634 billion over the same period. For the calendar year ending 2004, the four main banks—Commonwealth, ANZ, National and Westpac—together earned an after-tax profit of over $12 billion. That amounts to just under 1.5 per cent of GDP. Put another way, out of every dollar spent in Australia, approximately 1½ cents ends up as after-tax profits for just the four major banks. Present indications are that profits are continuing to rise, with the ANZ reporting half-yearly profits to March 2005 of $1.4 billion, Westpac of $1.3 billion and the National Bank of $2.5 billion—and they are only half-yearly figures.

This statement has been brought about by a recent letter from one of the major banks outlining the new internet banking charges and increases in charges for a number of other services. The letter confirmed to me that banks will always look for ways to make enormous profits at the expense of their customers while cutting back on the dwindling services they provide. The inferior service and rising fees by one of the major banks has finally worn me down, so I recently transferred my business to a smaller financial institution. It has proven to be a good move and worth the paperwork involved, as I have rediscovered value for money and the meaning of customer service. I call on the major banks to have a good hard look at themselves. They are big players in the Australian economy and their culture of greed leaves our society poorer both financially and socially. It is about time they lifted their game, gave the general public a break from the constantly increasing charges and improved their services.

Lifeline Book Fair

Ms OWENS (Parramatta) (9.46 am)—Recently I had the pleasure of attending a book fair organised by Lifeline Western Sydney in order to raise money for their extremely important work amongst the disadvantaged in our community. The book fair took place over three days. It was Lifeline Western Sydney’s first book fair, planned and organised in just three months. During those months a small army of volunteers worked tirelessly behind the scenes and an even smaller group coordinated the marketing of the event—drivers to collect the books, packers, sorters, people to price the books and pack them up again and eventually to move them all down to Parramatta Mission where the book fair took place. In all, 23,000 books were collected and sorted and packed and taken down to the fair for sale, and that alone was an extraordinary achievement by a group of very committed people.
Then came the fair itself. Lifeline had organised volunteers to staff the fair for the three days, but to their delight many more people just turned up to help. In the end over 70 volunteers came during the three days with at least 40 there at any given time. Through their work the book fair raised $17,700 for Lifeline Western Sydney, a great achievement and certainly something to be proud of. Considering that similar book fairs by other Lifeline regions only raised between $1,000 and $2000 from their first book fairs, this was an extraordinary achievement. I worked with some of those volunteers in the early months and I know that they were very much finding their way. It is an extraordinary achievement for them to have raised this amount of money in such a short time.

I had the pleasure on the Saturday of the fair of organising a sausage sizzle originally to sell sausage-on-a-roll to the many people who came to the fair but also to feed the volunteers. With so many volunteers turning up, my staff and I, with a number of volunteers of my own, were kept extremely busy keeping 70 very busy people fed for the day. It was an absolute privilege to provide the service for them and I cannot thank them enough for the work they do in our local community, particularly with the disadvantaged. It was a great event and Lifeline Western Sydney is to be congratulated.

Casey Electorate: Montrose Primary School

Mr ANTHONY SMITH (Casey) (9.48 am)—Last Saturday I had the privilege to join in the celebrations of the 125th birthday of Montrose Primary School in the heart of my electorate of Casey. I joined with the principal, Peter Durkin, students, teachers, parents and hundreds of past students, teachers and parents, and some past students going back to the 1930s and 40s. During the official proceedings Peter Durkin, the principal, reflected on the rich history of the school. You can just imagine, Mr Deputy Speaker, what Montrose, which lies at the foot of the Dandenongs, was like in the 1880s. The main mode of transport of course would have been horse and cart and Montrose was just a small village between the larger towns of Croydon and Lilydale. Cars and planes and computers and televisions were all the stuff of science fiction in the 1880s in colonial Victoria. It was a very different world. Melbourne itself was not yet 50 years old as a city and Australia had not federated as a nation. To have a school 125 years on that predates Federation, a school that existed in the colony of Victoria—not the state of Victoria—and to have a school and all its buildings still there in such a rich community today was something that was an honour to help celebrate.

Many things have of course changed in Montrose and at the school over those years, but the most enduring things that helped to build the school into the success it is today have not changed. I speak of course of the principles and values that drive the school, and have done right through its 125-year history. There is a strong personal commitment at the school to the children and to the school as a whole. There is a genuine concern between parents and teachers, a rich involvement by the parents of students and by past parents who continue their involvement. With the growth of metropolitan Melbourne and the outer regions, that sense of community could so easily have been lost in recent decades but it has not been, either at the school or in Montrose. That is reflected every time I visit the school. On each occasion I am reminded that a local school is as strong as its local community, and Montrose is one of the best examples of that.

Earlier this year when I presented badges to school captains it was wonderful to see the hall chock-a-block with parents and grandparents, and it was a reminder of the great work that the
school is doing. I would like to congratulate Montrose Primary School on its past achievements and the dedication and professionalism of its staff, and the school council and parents for their support of the students and for their great involvement in the community. I am sure that over the next 125 years the school will continue to be a pillar of the community and that it will be one when today’s students celebrate in 75 years time. (Time expired)

Parkinson’s Disease

Mr SAWFORD (Port Adelaide) (9.51 am) — Earlier this year I met with Andrew Dow, President of the Management Committee of Parkinson’s South Australia Inc. Andrew has written to all state and federal members in South Australia, requesting urgent assistance for Parkinson’s South Australia. He certainly has a case. He pointed out that if someone were diagnosed today in South Australia with a degenerative condition such as arthritis, asthma, diabetes, heart disease, Alzheimer’s, muscular dystrophy or multiple sclerosis, they would know where to turn for help, and those organisations would have a plan for the person to follow to enable the best possible quality of life.

Unfortunately, that is not necessarily the case if your diagnosis is Parkinson’s disease in South Australia. Amazingly, Parkinson’s South Australia has no ongoing government funding other than a miserly rental assistance for its portion of office space at 23A King William Road, Unley, and the occasional small grant. It is amazing. The membership base is approximately 1,000, yet it is estimated that the current number of people in South Australia who are afflicted with this disease is 14,000.

As we know, Parkinson’s disease is a degenerative movement disorder associated with the brain, cause unknown, with no known cure. Many people who have Parkinson’s disease in South Australia are unaware that they can enjoy a better quality of life by obtaining education and assistance in the areas that trouble them most. Parkinson’s South Australia employs one permanent part-time salaried member, who is paid for 32 hours a week but who works much longer hours. Her salary is paid for by fundraising. Everyone else is a volunteer, which has obvious limitations, and competition for the charity dollar is getting more difficult, as we can all appreciate.

Andrew Dow and his management committee believe that the organisation can no longer sustain its current services for sufferers of Parkinson’s disease. Some interstate Parkinson’s groups are in fact well funded and well recognised, but this is not so in South Australia. Without meaning to diminish the importance of assistance given to other not-for-profit organisations, a comparison between Alzheimer’s South Australia and Parkinson’s SA shows things to be completely out of kilter. It is estimated that in 2005 there are approximately 18,000 people in South Australia who have dementia, with the rate growing at 1,500 a year. Alzheimer’s SA can employ 48 full-time and permanent part-time staff, and doubtless they need every one of them. Compare that with one part-time person at Parkinson’s SA. As I said, it is estimated that 14,000 people have Parkinson’s disease in South Australia. This is not good enough. A recurrent grant of $150,000 is required to fund just the bare essentials. Surely that could be achieved.

At a seminar at the Royal Adelaide Hospital on 16 March this year, Professor Phil Thompson reported that 40 per cent of 761 recent admissions of people with Parkinson’s disease were from complications that might have been prevented or managed at home at a greatly
reduced cost if Parkinson’s SA could have effectively serviced their needs. It is worth serious consideration. *(Time expired)*

**Drought**

Mr **JOHN COBB** (Parkes—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Transport and Regional Services) *(9.55 am)*—Last Friday the Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister came to the south of my electorate to see at first-hand the effects of the drought, especially in mixed farming areas. But there are farmers all around Australia who are devastated, as are their towns, about what has been happening. Many people put a lot of effort into making sure everything went smoothly, that the Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister were able to see at first-hand what was happening, and that they were able to talk to as many farmers as possible in the time they had. I particularly thank Bland Shire Council Mayor David Bolte and General Manager Frank Zaknich, Lachlan or Condobolin Shire Council Mayor Terry Brady and General Manager Roger Bailey, and all the staff who went out of their way and had to make last minute changes. They did an incredible job of making the day go well. I especially thank farmers not just from my region but from way down south, as far away as Junee, who came to speak to the Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister to make known exactly what has been happening.

Some 500 or 700 people from Lake Cargelligo gathered at the edge of a lake, which is almost dry, to have two hours of casual conversation as the Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister wandered in amongst them and listened to not just their agricultural concerns but the concerns of communities who are fast running out of water. Ivanhoe in our electorate is out of water already, and the Lachlan Shire Council has had to take extraordinary measures to deal with Lake Cargelligo.

The owners of the property at Kikoira between West Wyalong and Lake Cargelligo—where the two leaders of our nation went to see an actual farm situation at first-hand—are Noel and Jodie Hoskinson and their young family. You could not see a better example of young farmers on a property that they have done their level best to look after well. They have looked after the stock to make sure that when the drought finishes—and it will eventually finish—they can march forward. They are doing it damn tough: meeting bank commitments and meeting feed commitments not just for the stock but for the family of five children as well.

While I am on my feet I must also mention that in my electorate there is only one Rural Lands Protection Board region which is not in exceptional circumstances and that is Dubbo. I believe we must review that as soon as possible. We are waiting for the state to put in another application, which thus far they seem disinclined to do. It is a region which is suffering badly and I sincerely hope that the recent changes will help. *(Time expired)*

The **DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. IR Causley)**—Order! In accordance with standing order 275A the time for members’ statements has concluded.

**PRIMARY INDUSTRIES (EXCISE) LEVIES AMENDMENT (RICE) LEGISLATION**

Mrs **HULL** (Riverina) *(9.58 am)*—On indulgence, I respond to a question to me in the Main Committee yesterday. Mr Danby asked: what is the consumption of water required to produce a kilo of rice? It is not 21,000 litres. The answer is that it takes 1,600 to 2,000 litres to produce a kilogram of rice.
CONDOLENCES

Hon. Sir Johannes (Joh) Bjelke-Petersen KCMG

Debate resumed from 25 May, on motion by Mr Abbott:

That the House take note of the document.

Mrs DE-ANNE KELLY (Dawson—Minister for Veterans’ Affairs) (9.58 am)—I rise to pay tribute to the late Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen, the man who built modern Queensland. Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen was born in Dannevirke in New Zealand on 13 January 1911. He had an older brother named Christian and a younger sister named Agnete. He was the son of Danish pastor Carl Bjelke-Petersen, who brought his young family to Australia when Sir Joh was only two. They settled on a small farming property near Kingaroy, north of Brisbane, where the family of his mother, Marn, had resided. The farm was called Bethany and it was to be the anchor for Sir Joh’s life thereafter.

In those early days, life in the Bjelke-Petersen household was very difficult. Carl was forced to retire early due to ill health and the Bjelke-Petersens were supported by Marn’s family. The poverty and the struggle of those early years left Sir Joh determined to work hard to improve the prospects for him and his family. At the age of 12 he was dealt a cruel blow when he was diagnosed with polio. He attributed his eventual recovery to the determination and dedication of his mother. Through daily treatments Sir Joh regained his health, although he always had traces of that terrible disease.

Sir Joh recognised that hard work alone would not solve all of life’s problems. He was someone who worked smarter as well, by looking at better ways to work the farm. Horses gave way to tractors, and generators and lights were installed on his tractors so he could work long into the night. Sir Joh also built one of the first peanut thrashers and made his name as a contractor, rather than a peanut farmer, although he was fondly known as ‘the peanut farmer’. Through his contracting days he developed a strong network of people who knew, trusted and respected him. That network was to prove the bridge to politics. He had a brief period in local government before winning the state seat of Nanango, which later became the seat of Barambah, in 1947. Sir Joh held the seat for 41 years and changed the face of Queensland and Australian politics forever.

Sitting on the opposition benches for the first 10 years of his political career, he watched how Labor squandered its time in office. He was determined he would not let that opportunity pass by when the conservatives won government. That chance came in 1957, when the Country Party-Liberal coalition won office. After Sir Joh had a period on the back bench, then Premier Frank Nicklin made Sir Joh the Minister for Works and Housing in 1963, a position he held for five years. Seven months later he became Premier, when Jack Pizzey died from a heart attack.

An obituary in the Australian described Sir Joh as a ‘non-drinking, non-smoking, staunchly Christian, indefatigable champion of all things Queensland’—and he certainly was. That belief in Queensland carried the state from strength to strength. Under Sir Joh, Brisbane hosted the Commonwealth Games in 1982 and Expo in 1988. His shrewd political skill made Queensland into a low-taxing state by abolishing death duties and he boosted the Treasury finances by developing the huge coal basins. I remember how Queensland was when I was a very young girl. In those days it used to take us three hours to drive 100 kilometres as the roads
were so bad. Queensland was a dusty backwater. It was an agricultural state. There was none of the mighty coal industry. Now in my electorate the largest coal-exporting port in the world is to be found at Dalrymple Bay and Hay Point. All of that was built by Sir Joh. In those days not one tonne of coal was exported from Queensland. He invited Utah and other coalmining companies in the United States to take an interest in Queensland coal. They certainly did and they built the mightiest coal exporting state in the world.

But Sir Joh was also interested in anything that would develop Queensland and take it forward. I can recall speaking at one stage to one of the developers from the south, who said Sir Joh rang them all up in Melbourne and said, ‘Come up and see Queensland and what we’ve got to offer.’ At that time the Gold Coast was a couple of humble little houses along a pretty much deserted beach. The developers came up, had a look and of course they were stunned. They then started to invest in the Gold Coast, the Sunshine Coast and the Whitsundays, and now we have one of the mightiest tourism destinations in the world. All of that is due to one man’s vision and drive to make Queensland no longer the ‘cinderella state’.

Sir Joh was fond of counting the things that indicated prosperity in Queensland. Cranes on the skyline in Brisbane were one of his barometers of prosperity and success. He would often count them, and in his various interviews he would regale everybody with how many cranes there were—in fact he had his desk and office orientated not towards the glorious Brisbane River but to the city so that he could count the cranes and realise how prosperous Queensland was becoming. And over the decades he turned the lonely sandhills of the Gold Coast into a high-rise city. At his peak, a thousand people a week migrated from Sydney, Melbourne and New Zealand to live in our glorious state. Sir Joh’s trademark response to media questions—‘Don’t you worry about that’—is possibly unrivalled in the Australian political vocabulary. He was famous for a lot of other sayings. I remember one that arose when he was once chided about his age. He said, ‘Listen, it’s an old dog for a hard track. Let the puppies have the pavement.’ That put the obstreperous young journalist who asked the question back in his place.

Sir Joh’s political fortunes reached their zenith in 1980 when Sir Joh’s wife, Lady Flo, won a Senate seat. By then, of course, he was no longer the simple farmer from Kingaroy. In 1984 he was knighted by the Queen. Most premiers are hardly known outside their home state—not so Sir Joh. He was a premier who transcended state boundaries and who rose to the national stage. In 1987 he launched his plan to become Prime Minister. Not all great plans come to fruition, and unfortunately his ‘Joh for PM’ campaign did not come to pass. But he would have been very proud, as he was, of Queensland and of Australia, to see how prosperous and strong his state and his nation are now. Given the huge strides made in Queensland in Sir Joh’s time, one wonders how Australia would have fared as well.

Sir Joh retired from politics in 1987, but certainly not from an active life. His 19-year period as National Party Premier remains unbroken in Queensland today. Sir Joh was also an accomplished pilot. He had an interest in everything. One of his proudest moments was obtaining his helicopter pilot’s licence when he was 71. He maintained his fixed-wing and helicopter pilot’s licences until the age of 78.

The guiding light of Sir Joh’s life was his strong Christian faith. From his young years, Sir Joh was a Sunday school teacher. He was involved in Lutheran young people’s activities, ultimately becoming a lay preacher. He was elected to both state and federal councils of the Lu-
theran Church and was a founding member of the St Peter’s Lutheran College Council. He lived in Devonport when he retired from politics and was there for several years with a business partner. Returning to Bethany, he was diagnosed with supranuclear palsy and eventually required an electric wheelchair to move about.

Sir Joh and Lady Flo were always sociable. They accepted visits to Bethany by tour buses and served tea and Lady Flo’s famous pumpkin scones. Sir Joh is survived by Lady Flo, his wife of 52 years, and their four children: Meg, John, Helen and Ruth, as well as 13 grandchildren and two great grandchildren.

I would like in the time left to me to share some of my personal observations of Sir Joh and Lady Flo and their family. Sir Joh was tough. He was completely uncompromising when he believed that the future prosperity of Queensland was at risk. During the terrible power failures in Queensland when the state was held to ransom, it was not unusual for the power to go off. We ran a small business at that time and you would be in the middle of getting a job out or doing something and suddenly the power was off. For businesses and households—whether mum was trying to heat water for a baby’s bottle or to give a baby a bath—it was a very inconvenient time.

Sir Joh decided that he would take on the unions and turn the lights on in Queensland—and he did. I can remember that the power was off for weeks while that tense battle was on. The lights came on in Queensland and prosperity was returned. People knew that they could use the power when they needed it; it was available. It was his toughness and uncompromising approach that finally came through for all Queenslanders against a very belligerent and small group of unionists who tried to hold us to ransom.

But there were other aspects to Sir Joh, too. He was one of the most courtly and well-mannered gentlemen you would ever meet—and he was a complete gentleman. I recall talking to one of the air hostesses on a plane and she said: ‘We love it when Sir Jo and Lady Flo fly with us. They know all our names. They always ask after our families, and they are so polite.’ Indeed, they were that way to everyone.

At meetings that I attended, I would always note that Sir Joh particularly would stop and speak to the people that no-one else spoke to. If there was someone at the back, perhaps an elderly, frail person sitting quietly or someone in a wheelchair, Sir Joh—who was surrounded of course by people who would always come to the fore—would always make a point of going quietly to the back and having a few words to those who were perhaps not as prominent in the community. He was enormously kind and always noted everyone. And he remembered names. I do not know how he and Lady Flo did it; they may not have seen someone for a few years but they remembered their names. It is an ability that I wish I had.

Sir Joh and Lady Flo travelled extensively. There would not be a town in Queensland that they did not visit during their long political time. I can recall when, during Prime Minister Whitlam’s time, Sir Joh was campaigning in Queensland and he decided he would have the greatest campaign any premier had ever had. He travelled throughout the state—so much so that the Prime Minister of the day said he had better catch up. He was an enormously energetic man, and he inspired so many of us. For me, politics had always been a fairly dull thing but not under Sir Joh, and particularly with Lady Flo by his side. They were energetic people who brought a real passion and conviction to delivering for the people they were responsible for. They loved Queensland and they loved the Queensland people.

MAIN COMMITTEE
As with everybody, not every project was a vast success, but Sir Joh always had a go. Queensland, my beautiful state that I remember as the dusty, backward state it was when I was a young girl, where it took three hours to drive 100 kilometres and where there was little more than just agriculture, is now such a wonderful, mighty place. For young Queenslanders there are so many opportunities for good jobs, secure futures and nice homes. All of that was due to the energy, the conviction and the Christian beliefs of one very kind, tough and resolute gentleman: Sir Joh. To Sir Joh, rest in peace.

**Mr KATTER** (Kennedy) (10.11 am)—by leave—I thank the honourable member for Dawson for a very excellent contribution and a very moving contribution as well on the motion to take note of the passing of Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen. As she said, it is true that Queensland was an economic backwater. Dr Brian Galligan from the ANU, in his book on microeconomic politics, described Queensland prior to Bjelke-Petersen as an economic backwater, a sort of Cinderella state. That was a very accurate description indeed, and when the honourable member for Dawson spoke about the Gold Coast I remembered a three-storey hotel, Lennons, being built there. Everyone said it would go broke, and it did—three times, actually. They called it the Beau Geste because it was surrounded by sand. It is right in the centre of what is now an area with 30- and 40-storey metropolis in every direction, yet it was not all that long ago that a three-storey hotel on the Gold Coast, right in the middle of Broadbeach, was surrounded by sand dunes.

Paul Bongiorno, the commentator, when I first came down here said to me: ‘Oh! What are you doing down here?’ because he was a reporter in Brisbane. He said, ‘I’m one of the big-time reporters’—I do not know whether he used quite that expression—‘and this is where the action is now, in Canberra.’ He said: ‘Bjelke-Petersen has gone. Half the press corps down here have moved from Brisbane.’ They were there because that was where everything was happening.

In the extra time I have been afforded—and I thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, for your generosity here—I wish to handle the issue of alleged corruption. Our government has been vilified as a dishonest government, but a test of that is how many decisions were reversed by the incoming Labor government. There was only one single decision reversed by the incoming Labor government. In other words, they put the rubber stamp, the imprimatur of approval, on almost every single decision we made. And the one they reversed was quite interesting, because they reversed it and then there was such a mass public outcry that they had to reverse it back again! The ultimate test was that not one single decision we made was reversed. So, if we were corrupt, the incoming Labor government and successive governments were also corrupt. That is the ultimate test.

It needs to be put on the record that Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen was actually charged with improperly assisting the cause of the people who wanted to redevelop the old port authority building. As heritage minister, I was involved in the decision, so I was very familiar with what transpired. Kern Corporation are wonderful builders in Queensland. A huge part of Queensland was built by those people and they were one of the applicants for the redevelopment. At all times—I disagreed with him on this—the Premier was strongly supportive of the Kern bid, yet he was charged with supporting the opposite bid. There were four ministers involved in that: Minister Powell, the Deputy Premier Bill Gunn, Minister Lester and me. I do not know about Minister Lester but I can tell you, even though Bill Gunn has now died, that the other
three were very determined to go to court and say just how outrageous it was that he had been
charged with influencing a decision in one way when he would always back people whom he
thought were great developers for Queensland.

If that is regarded as corruption, then you had better erase the coal industry from the face of
Queensland, because it was only the close relationship between Sir Leslie Theiss and Bjelke-
Petersen that enabled that industry to get away. The coal industry would exist, but it would
have developed much later and it would be much smaller than it is now if it had not been for
the very close relationship of those two very great Queenslanders.

There was a relationship with Keith Williams, the tourism developer who created the big-
gest manmade tourist attraction in Australia, Sea World, and then went on to produce the
Hamilton Island resort for Queensland. Keith Williams is now working—God bless him—on
developing Cardwell. I was there the other night; it is really beautiful. It is a great credit and
tribute to him. Yes, Sir Joh Bjelke Petersen sought out a close relationship with these great
builders at all times, because if you are going to develop a state you simply have to do that.
Mr Beattie now has very close relationships with a number of prominent businessmen. That is
a good thing; that is not a bad thing. We should say, ‘Yes, that is good; that is not bad.’

When my father was on the port authority in Townsville there were 670 people employed
in moving sugar off the little trains and onto the boats. After the bulk sugar terminals were
built in Queensland there were six people employed there. All right, you can say that 600
people lost their jobs, but we did not have any difficulty placing people in jobs in Queensland.
Our problem was always the desperate shortage of labour. Those bulk sugar terminals made
us the most efficient sugar producers in the entire world—as you, Mr Deputy Speaker
Causley, being a prominent leader in that industry, would know. Those initiatives were taken
with government money. Government guaranteed money or government money directly fi-
nanced all of those bulk sugar terminals. It would be very interesting to see what we would
have to do today if the industry was still like that under national competition policy.

I spend a lot of time in Cairns. Naturally, I go into the suburbs of Cairns as they are close to
the electorate I represent. Cairns was once a terrible place. It was a case of: first prize, one
week in Cairns; second price, two weeks in Cairns. No-one went to Cairns. It was a hot,
greasy, terrible place. I remember one morning at breakfast looking out across the patio and
seeing Lee Marvin and Bo Derek at breakfast at some of those prominent hotels.

Having said those things, I would just like to say that one of the great things that history
will recognise about Bjelke-Petersen was that he stood against the national competition policy
free market. We used to be accused of being too strongly for private enterprise, but looking
back at it he was under terrific pressure. I remember a violent fight in cabinet over the closure
of the diesel sheds in Hughenden—over which I threatened to resign. The minister said, ‘I
will call your bluff,’ and I said, ‘Well, you do it right here and now,’ and I stood up. The pre-
mier waded into the battle and said, ‘Look, these little towns need jobs; these people need
jobs. There’s more important things than that.’ But that was his attitude.

The man was maligned for being anti-worker, but in 1979 we had 23,000 employees in the
railways in Queensland. Ten years later we had 22,000, which is almost the same number.
There were no railway cutbacks in Bjelke-Petersen’s period at all. As I have said on many
occasions, if ever there were staunch supporters of the ALP, it was the railways. In my state electorate, all of the ALP polling booths were always manned by railwaymen. They were the heart and soul of the Labor Party. What they got for their 38 years of loyalty was the knife between the shoulder blades. Within five or six years of the incoming Labor government their numbers had reduced to about 14,000 or 15,000. I am told now they are down to 12,000. So the ALP introduced national competition policy and they destroyed the workers’ jobs throughout Queensland. You can say we were inefficient, but economically speaking we were the most successful government in Australian history. Governments in Queensland are still coasting on the fat that we created in the system.

In the electricity industry, we had a confrontation. At Ipswich, the coalminers went on strike. They were down the pit and they would not come up. Florence—that lovely, wonderful, great and gracious lady and also a very intelligent and astute lady; I reframed all my speeches so that I followed her example as I thought she always spoke so well and brilliantly—went down the coalmine and gave her husband a bit of a paddywhack, so we reinstated the coalmines that were about to close in Ipswich. I thought it was just people that cared about people at the end of the day. But, in the confrontation, it really was a situation where either we ran the electricity industry or some union heavies ran the electricity industry. They turned the lights out and we could not get the lights turned on. We had our backs to the wall. I could not see any other way out. History will have to judge whether we could have done it better. I said to some of my union friends: ‘If you can point a way out of this, I would like to hear it because you’ve got the lights turned off and we’ve got to get the lights turned on. We’re not going to employ people who are going to be called scabs 10 minutes later and sacked again; that’s not going to get the lights turned on.’

Joh also had a penchant for freedom. It is a word we do not use much in Australia. I think the American national anthem has ‘freedom’ in it five, six or seven times, but it is not anything we have ever admired or respected in Australia and we have lost it. Deadly snakes kill one person maybe every five or six years—certainly one person in my state electorate died of snakebite every 10 years. One of my leading people, who very generously handed out how to vote cards, died going up the backyard a few years ago. One of my best friends survived, but only very narrowly. He had his toe cut off from a taipan snakebite. I knew the minute the minister said we could not shoot snakes that he would be fixed up and in due course he was sacked. I knew that the Premier would do that. To tell us that we could not shoot a deadly, venomous creature that was threatening the lives of our children in our own backyards was just terrible. Joh fought off random breath testing, and there were those, including my father, who argued very strongly for random breath testing, but I remember exactly what he said in the cabinet meeting. He said, ‘We don’t want police pulling people up all the time all over the place. That’s not what we want in Queensland.’ That was the end of random breath testing. Again, history will have to judge us on that.

Tobacco smoking was another issue. You can say that it is dangerous. I played rugby league while I was able to and have since been a league executive. That is very dangerous too: my uncle was killed playing rugby league. There are many things that human beings do that are dangerous, but do we want to restrict them? Do we want a freedomless society or a free society? In a free society people are allowed to do things that they want to do, whether they are good or bad for them. There are other definitions of freedom superior to that, of course.
We were unapologetic, aggressive fighters for owner operated business. We had the most restrictive trading hours in Australia. They were there to protect not only the small business man but also the marketplace for our farmers. We now have 81 per cent of all retail sales of food being held by Woolworths and Coles, and it will increase with the takeover of Foodland. The trading hours were immediately liberalised the minute the ALP government came in. Yes, when it comes to freedom and free markets they are very free. That is so also of the Liberal and, I regret to say, the National parties. We also did not allow service stations to sell food, which was a way of preventing the oil companies from wiping out the small after hours business operators.

Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen said to me, ‘Bob, I always have a test. Is it good or is it bad? If it’s good, then we do it.’ Australia’s coal exports are probably worth $15,000 million or $16,000 million now and our total exports are worth $140,000 million. Those industries would not be there if it were not for his policies. In his final year in parliament, there was the World Expo and the proposed space base and the world’s tallest building. While I was convalescing, as I was for three months, and writing my history, I thought, ‘What am I going to title the chapters on McEwen, Bjelke-Petersen and Doug Anthony?’ and I titled those chapters ‘Walking with Giants’. (Time expired)

Mr BRUCE SCOTT (Maranoa) (10.26 am)—I rise here in the Main Committee to pay tribute to the great builder of Queensland—in fact, the architect of modern Queensland—Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen. His passing marks the end of an era, because of his important contribution to the development of Queensland. That important contribution and the development of modern Queensland can never be taken away from the legacy that Queenslanders have today. It is etched in our history. Whatever anyone ever thought of Sir Joh, and he was many things to many people, he achieved numerous things. He added to them day after day and year after year during his leadership of the government of Queensland—and he was leader for almost 20 years as the Premier of Queensland.

At the time of his premiership I had a young family, who wanted a start in life. I will always remember Sir Joh as a man of vision not only for the state of Queensland but for Australia. Whilst he always wanted to do the best he could for Queensland—and we all know he was very critical of Canberra from time to time, and rightly so, including, sadly, of some conservative governments—he was always loyal to the party that endorsed him way back in 1947 as the member for Nanango.

Mr Katter—That’s not correct, Bruce, and you know it’s not correct.

Mr BRUCE SCOTT—What?

Mr Katter—What you just said.

Mr BRUCE SCOTT—He was always loyal to his party.

Mr Katter—He was very bitter and hurt, and justified in being hurt.

Mr BRUCE SCOTT—He was loyal to his party. I and so many other people in my constituency were encouraged to join the Country Party and the National Party through the successes that they saw Bjelke-Petersen achieving as he led Queensland.

In 1947 Johannes Bjelke-Petersen was elected to the Queensland Legislative Assembly and after 21 years of holding various positions he became Premier of Queensland, marking the commencement of a massive political change in Queensland. He held the position of Premier
for almost 20 years—from 1968 to 1987. Sir Joh holds the record as the longest-serving Premier, and I believe—as the Prime Minister said in one of the eulogies at the state funeral in Kingaroy—that his record will never be surpassed by any Premier of any state in future.

Turning to the achievements of Sir Joh as Premier in leading the government of Queensland, we must never lose sight of the fact that, while he was Premier, he led a government of competent ministers. He was supported by many people in the community. It was not just a case of lone Premier Joh Bjelke-Petersen; it was his whole team. He led the team on to victories at election after election. I will never forget how, as leader of his government, he led the way in building dams. One of the sad legacies that we see in Australia today is that there has been insufficient planning by many governments, state and territory, in providing for the necessary water infrastructure to ensure that the communities we all represent have sufficient water for their present needs. But Joh, as Premier, was not one of those people.

The Wivenhoe Dam is a great example of a dam that serves Queensland—it serves Brisbane and the south-east corner, including the Gold Coast—so well today. Without that commitment and without that vision, for which he was criticised, Brisbane would have been out of water long ago. The Gold Coast would not be drawing on that dam today. The Hinze Dam, behind the Gold Coast, is part of the necessary infrastructure. Joh would have gone on constructing dams for the rightful purpose of providing water for communities where it was needed.

Many in my electorate have spoken about the development of the coal industry. The coal industry needs water for washing the coal. Without water you do not have a coal industry. The two go hand in hand. In outback parts of my electorate we saw the development of road infrastructure. Dirt tracks that had been there since Federation were turned into bitumen roads. Many people were driving on nothing more than dirt tracks. Joh was responsible for the Brigalow land development scheme. Much of that land is in my electorate. Families today have established and grown businesses. So many families had a start in life because of the brigalow land development scheme. It is a sustainable and magnificent scheme. The scheme created regional towns. Those towns have grown and prospered as a result of the brigalow land development scheme.

I am joined in the chamber by the honourable member for Hinkler. I guess he would not mind my contrasting the public health system in Queensland under Joh’s regime with that under the Premier of Queensland today. ‘Dr Death in Bundaberg’. You cannot help but make that contrast with the Bjelke-Petersen reign, when local communities had an interest in and an influence on their local health system. Sadly, the Bjelke-Petersen legacy has not continued under the Labor government in Queensland. I must reflect on that and look at what has occurred at the Bundaberg hospital, which is an absolute scandal. The Premier of Queensland cannot hide behind any watermelon smile. He should confront the fact that he has failed the people of Bundaberg and many other rural communities, as I think the inquiries continue to show. The health legacy of the former Queensland coalition government, led by Joh Bjelke-Petersen, is one that stands.

Education is another of his great legacies that we enjoy—Griffith University established and James Cook University. He also had the foresight to see that we needed agricultural colleges and technical colleges. He established them at Dalby, Emerald, Longreach and Burdekin, covering the four specific areas of agriculture—tropical, pastoral, irrigation and cropping.
and livestock. Crucial other development grew around the schools, the agricultural colleges and the universities. Those establishments have been successful for many years. They are certainly at risk now under the Queensland Labor government.

Another great legacy of Bjelke-Petersen and his government is the coal industry and the ports which service that industry. Without Bjelke-Petersen’s commitment and absolute determination to establish the coal industry, as Bob Katter said—I agree with him, although I do not always agree with what Bob says—it would have been years before it was developed.

Those were the days when we had railway lines actually open, carrying passengers in magnificent airconditioned passenger carriages from western and central western Queensland. Those were the days when grain was moved by rail—some of it is now moved by road because of the inefficiency of the rail system under the Labor government. The cattle industry from far western Queensland used to transport most of their cattle by rail. More and more they are being moved by road, once again because of the inefficiency of the rail system. That was not the case under the coalition government led by Joh. The rail system was there carrying bulk commodities—cattle and grain. Rail is the rightful place for transporting those commodities.

Major events such as the Commonwealth Games came to Queensland under Bjelke-Petersen. And no-one seemed to want Expo 88. It was rejected by Malcolm Fraser for the Commonwealth, and by other states. Joh said, ‘We’ll put it on in Queensland.’ Many of the states laughed at him, as they were wont to, but Joh said, ‘We will have it.’

Mr Neville—They were slow to put their pavilions up.

Mr BRUCE SCOTT—Absolutely. The states were there; nations from around the world were there. It was a magnificent time in Queensland. You could walk down the street and see people from all around the world. Joh said, ‘We can do it in Queensland,’ and whilst many ridiculed Queensland and said we would never do it, that it would never be a success in Queensland, much to the contrary, it was an outstanding success, a magnificent time in Brisbane and in Queensland. You can never take away the success of Expo 88 and we still have a lot of prosperity that was created by the Bjelke-Petersen government.

I want to comment in relation to some of the media articles after his passing—in particular, articles in the Bulletin magazine. I found the articles in the Bulletin magazine totally inappropriate. I do not want to dwell on them but I believe that the editor of the Bulletin magazine should at least apologise for what can only be described as vile commentary on a person after his death. I found the words used repulsive. I am not going to dignify them by repeating them but they are offensive to me and I believe to many decent people from all walks of life and from all political persuasions. I think the least the editor could do is apologise to the Bjelke-Petersen family.

I could talk for hours and hours about Bjelke-Petersen. There is a lot I would like to talk about but time will not let me. I know that Joh was an absolutely tireless worker for Queensland. He never stopped working for and thinking about Queenslanders, whether they were the little people or major corporations at the big end of town. He always gave them time, but he never walked away from his fundamental belief of doing what he believed was right for Queensland.
In conclusion I extend my sympathy to Lady Bjelke-Petersen and to the extended Bjelke-Petersen family. I was at the state funeral for Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen. It was a magnificent funeral, and Bjelke-Petersens came from many parts of the world to be there. Finally, I would like to quote one of Joh’s great quotes: ‘Let me tell you: what is good for Queensland is good for Australia.’ He always held that belief, and he said he always lost a lot of sleep because: ‘I don’t know what will happen when I go.’ As his son John said in concluding his address at the state funeral: ‘Don’t you worry about that’—which is one of Joh’s most famous quotes and one which will often be repeated by many of us. As he often said to the media: ‘Don’t you worry about that. You let me worry about that and we’ll fix it up,’ and he did. He made Queensland a magnificent state. We all enjoy the legacy of his work and we are the sadder for his passing. He had a great life and he achieved so much for all of us. May he rest in peace.

Mr NEVILLE (Hinkler) (10.41 am)—It is a great privilege to speak about such a seminal character in Australian history and to have known him so well. It is hard to believe that there are still people around who spent long hours behind the horse and the plough, who cleared the scrub by horse and hand, who milked cows by hand and who literally created their own futures out of sheer physical work. Joh Bjelke-Petersen came from hardy Danish stock and he was one such person. His family settled at Bethany, near Kingaroy, described by his son John in his eulogy as Joh’s anchor point. It was there that his engagement with agriculture commenced. It was there that he served his Lutheran Church, it was there that he raised his family, it was from there that he fostered the sense of innovative enterprise and it was from there that he launched a remarkable political career.

His former press secretary and adviser Ken Crooke said of him: ‘No-one then or since has been able to stride the political stage and stir emotions quite like Joh.’ And that is true; he is aptly described by Ken Crooke in that statement. He served 41 years as the member for the state seats of Nanango and Barambah—24 years as a state government minister and 19 years as Premier. It is an inescapable fact that Joh Bjelke-Petersen was a controversial figure; no-one would deny that. As a young man he defied the then conventional wisdom by pioneering the use of tractors, by designing threshing machines for peanuts, by initiating aerial spraying and by pulling scrub with a heavy chain between two bulldozers. Always looking for a new edge or a better way to do things he tolerated and sometimes championed people with controversial, if not way-out, ideas. When things did not work out, he was not bowed by his fair share of the odium that sometimes followed that trust. Perhaps we should see that in the context of Joh as a polio sufferer. He was treated by the Sister Kenny method of hot packs and electric currents through the muscles. It is amazing that, while Sister Kenny was ridiculed in those days for that, if you go to a physiotherapist today that is exactly what will happen. I think that, having been treated as a boy of 12 in that way by his mother and medical staff, he probably empathised with people who, despite ridicule, pushed the boundaries of medical and scientific enterprise.

In politics he was uncompromising. Most often when he said he was going to do something it happened. The development of Brisbane and Queensland in the seventies and eighties is testament to that. In short, you either loved him or hated him but you could not ignore him. Even his enemies, I suspect, had a grudging admiration for him and the way he drove Queensland forward. Despite not having a tertiary education, he understood the tenet of good management: to surround yourself with capable and positive colleagues. That he did. He had a
superb public service team led by people of the calibre of Sir Leo Hielscher and Sir Syd Schubert. Again, there were no compromises: progress, yes, but things had to be done right. Things like workers compensation and public service superannuation were fully funded. At that stage Queensland was the only state to do so. Ironically, it is something which the Commonwealth is now embracing, three decades later, through the future fund.

One of the best tributes to Sir Joh came in an ABC recorded interview on its 612 feedback line from a former Joh-era public servant of 20 years standing. He said that during the Joh years there was a balance between ‘bureaucracy and the people in the field getting the job done’. It is undeniable that during that era there was little of the bureaucratic paralysis and endless studies and endless consultancies that have marked the last two decades. I have always loved Shakespeare, and the real genius of Joh and his team is summed up by the quote: There is a tide in the affairs of men Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune; In Queensland’s case it did. Joh had a rare ability to seize the moment. Expo 88 was a case in point. When the other states walked away from it, Joh seized it. In 1982 we saw not only the Commonwealth Games coming back to Australia after many years but—and you will recall the big kangaroo—the first Commonwealth Games as a big spectacle. It was that big spectacle that led to the spectacles of subsequent Commonwealth and Olympic games—and that started with Joh. He also seized the push for tourism. It was made a seriously focused ministerial responsibility. Queensland surged in tourist popularity, matched by an equally large surge in infrastructure, in many cases to international standards. In that too he put a great emphasis on research. People like Sir Frank Moore, who led his Queensland tourist and travel corporation, made sure that Queensland did not have superficial gloss and there was substance as to where the tourist industry was going. In the arts, Joh took a ramshackle art gallery and a ramshackle museum and started the first stages of that marvellous complex on the south side of the Brisbane River, some of it adjoining the Expo 88 site.

This tide taken at the flood attitude manifested itself in other and more lasting ways. Is it not ironic, in these days of unprecedented ravaging drought, that Joh had the foresight to build a network of dams? I suppose you could say Joh was building at least one major dam every two years. Some of them are magnificent edifices, particularly the Burdekin and Fairbairn dams. He was responsible for building a host of others, including the Wivenhoe, Hinze, Beardmore, Bjelke-Petersen—later named in his honour—and Eungella dams and, in my area, the Fred Haigh Dam on the Kolan River. It is also ironic that the Labor government that succeeded his government took great pride in scrapping plans for a dam for the Gold Coast hinterland. The construction of its modern-day and urgently needed replacement will be a much more challenging and expensive affair.

Sir Joh realised that a front-end push was necessary to create and sustain momentum of industrial development in Queensland. He took every possible opportunity to take the tide at the flood. The great resource companies of the world, especially coal and aluminium, were to beat a track to Brisbane and the state’s huge industrial potential was tapped for the first time. Joh also seized the opportunities which would flow from infrastructure development: ports were established, mines were opened, railway lines were built and electrified. It is interesting to note that the royalties and charges that emanated to Queensland Rail from this explosion made it the only truly profitable railway in Australia, to the point where coal lines cross-
subsidise their main line and suburban services. Joh Bjelke-Petersen’s vision also took form in the Queensland railway network. It was he who saw the necessity of electrifying and modernising the Brisbane urban transport system. All of these projects were gutsy, well negotiated, visionary and of immense and subsequent value to Queensland and Australia.

This was a man who saw what was before him, dreamed of what it could be and carved it into a modern, dynamic state. Gladstone in my electorate is a prime example of his vision. In the early days Gladstone was a town of 6,000 or 7,000 people sitting on the mudflats and reliant on a meatworks which opened and closed and subsequently failed. In the Joh era it took its first faltering steps to become the powerhouse of Central Queensland. Joh was prepared to back that vision with capital grants to the councils of that area—something which they crave today but, sadly, the pleas fall on deaf ears.

I also have personal knowledge of Sir Joh’s work on the dams. As a then candidate for election—that was my first run—I stood on the back of a truck with Sir John McEwen, the then Deputy Prime Minister. We were trying to get up a thing called the Burnett-Kolan scheme, now the very popular Bundaberg irrigation scheme. From the back of the truck John McEwen said, ‘I will wring the money out of Canberra,’ and he did. Joh matched his commitment with state funds and although the scheme, which is now reaching its zenith, had some troubled times over the last three decades, it would never have got off the ground without his help. To those historical revisionists who taint his leadership and the good he did for Queensland, I say this: it is very easy to judge people or situations with the wisdom of hindsight.

Let me deal with political weightage. It is interesting that, after all the criticism of political weightage, the system Joh used was the ALP system introduced in 1949. Not only that, in those days all the seats west of the range, like Bourke, Balyando, Gregory and Warrego, were held by Labor. But suddenly, when the National Party took those seats off them, it became a rort. It was either a rort in ’49 or a rort later. What is even more interesting is that Professor Hughes in the EARC commission of inquiry said that there was a case for weightage for seats west of the Great Dividing Range—that is very interesting.

Of course, you hear Joh criticised for the way he pulled brigalow scrub with two bulldozers and a chain. In today’s environmental era, perhaps so, but at that time we were in the postwar era. Australia was screaming out for development. There were schemes like soldier settlement schemes, land ballot schemes and the brigalow project. This was seen as nation building, and he harnessed his abilities for that nation building.

I knew Joh Bjelke-Petersen in many other ways. He came to Bundaberg once and the railway workers said, ‘Will you bring the Premier down to the railway shed?’ We went down to the railway shed, which was falling apart—the white ants were into it and there were sheets of metal over the floor to stop the workers falling through. He turned to me and said, ‘Goodness gracious me, Paul, you can’t ask men to work in these conditions.’ He rang me—I cannot remember whether it was on Easter Monday or Boxing Day but it was at the end of a major holiday period—and he said, ‘I have spoken to Sir Gordon Chalk’—who was the Treasurer—‘and that thing will be rebuilt and the money will be allocated by 30 June,’ and it was.

Similarly with the much demonised SEQEB strike: we hear about how tough he was on the strikers—and he was; no-one denies that—but the women of Brisbane were washing out the nappies with hoses in their backyards in those days because there was nothing to run the home
appliances—there was no electricity. What he did for the electricity industry in Queensland is not unlike what happened on the waterfront in 1998. It has been a great industry ever since.

He certainly was a remarkable character. I did not always agree with him. I disagreed with him over the marching legislation and I told him so. I asked him why he did not just let them march and he said, ‘No, no, no, no, no, Paul, there is a lesson from history: you never let the mobs have the street.’ In the context of those days that is what it was.

I extend to Lady Florence; to her son, John; and to Meg, Helen and Ruth the condolences of the National Party and of my family. I attended Sir Joh’s funeral, a seminal event in Australian history, the end of an era. This was a man—whence comes such another?

Debate (on motion by Ms Hall) adjourned.

Hon. Albert Jaime Grassby AM

Debate resumed from 10 May, on motion by Mr Abbott:

That the House take note of the document.

Ms KING (Ballarat) (10.57 am)—It is well known that Al Grassby, the 10-quid migrant, was the father of multiculturalism. But he was so many other things as well—the devoted republican, champion for Indigenous Australians and a true servant of the public. It is of course not possible to capture the essence of a man in a few words, especially a man who lived as rich a life as Al Grassby. Al was one of those rare people who made a difference in every stage and sphere of life and work. Tributes from all sections of the community flooded in after Al passed away on 23 April 2005. I would like to use this condolence motion speech today to recognise Al’s contribution to Australia and in particular to recognise his work in my own electorate of Ballarat.

Al Grassby was born in Brisbane of parents of Spanish and Irish descent. As a child he spent many years overseas where he acquired a deeper understanding of different cultures. Al suffered the loss of his father in a London air raid in World War II, which led Al to support his mother, Margaret, by enlisting as a private in the British army. Apparently this was short-lived and he later worked as a cadet journalist.

Al’s political life began when he returned to Australia in 1948. He joined the Australian Labor Party at the age of 21 and was elected the state member for Murrumbidgee in 1965. Al was appointed the shadow minister for agriculture and conservation in 1968, but it was really in federal parliament that Al blossomed. Al was the federal Minister for Immigration from 1972 to 1974, when he initiated extensive reforms in immigration, citizenship and human rights legislation. As director of Australian INFO International, he oversaw a special assignment for UNESCO with an international schools program in seven countries and a review of multicultural information services by New South Wales Health Services. He examined Aboriginal Australian experience of land management in Northern Australia, drafted land management curriculum for Charles Sturt University, advised Fuji Ryokka Corporation of Australia involved in the establishment of joint Thailand-Australia enterprises and conducted the writing of Burnum-Burnum’s Aboriginal Australia.

Al Grassby has had a truly remarkable career and life. In amongst this, Ballarat and the Eureka flag held a very special place in Al’s heart, and I know that Ballarat holds a special place in its heart for Al. It was over 30 years ago when Al first came to Ballarat to attend the first national celebration of the Eureka Stockade: Eureka had always been of great signifi-
cance to Al. He once described it as the ‘finest moment in Australian history, a bonny strike for freedom and independence against colonial oppression and exploitation’. His love for the spirit of Eureka overlapped with his passion for multiculturalism. Al saw the Eureka Stockade in Ballarat as the founding capital of multicultural Australia. He loved the fact that nearly 20 ethnic backgrounds came together at Eureka to fight as one for a common Australian cause.

The Eureka flag holds a special significance for the people of Ballarat. It was Al, when he was a minister in the Whitlam government, who arranged to fly the Eureka flag for the first time over Parliament House in Canberra. Al’s passion for the Eureka flag and the values it represents was not just some passing interest. In 2002, Al was guest of honour at the annual Eureka Sunday luncheon. He pledged his ‘heart and hands to achieving three objectives to make Eureka the continuing inspiration of the Australian people’.

His first objective was to have the ‘flag of stars’ proclaimed a ‘flag of Australia’ under section 5 of the Flags Act 1953. As many members in this place will know, this is a commitment I share with Al. It is hard to believe that the Eureka flag still has no legal recognition after nearly 150 years. It is a shame that the private member’s bill I introduced and that was reintroduced by Senator Gavin Marshall in the Senate was not voted on and debated before Al passed away.

Al’s second objective was to properly mark Eureka in every corner of Australia by proclaiming December 3, the day of battle, a public holiday. The third of Al’s objectives was to have the true history and significance of Eureka recognised in Australian schools. On one of his many visits to Ballarat Al once remarked:

When my time is up I look forward to being buried with the flag of the Southern Cross symbolizing my passion for the great moments of Eureka.

The city of Ballarat provided Al’s family with the Eureka flag for just that purpose at his funeral. Al, I hope you are resting peacefully with your Southern Cross and, like the Eureka rebellion, your passion, spirit and contribution to Australia will reach well beyond your lifetime. Your passion for the Eureka flag and Ballarat will be greatly missed by the people of Ballarat.

There is so much to remember about Al Grassby and so much I have not been able to mention. Al Grassby’s contributions are hard to quantify. On behalf of the people of Ballarat, I would like to extend our condolences to his family. Al, you will be sorely missed by all of us.

Mr McMULLAN (Fraser) (11.02 am)—It is a pleasure for me to have the opportunity to join this condolence motion for Al Grassby. I want to speak about Al as a significant national figure for a generation. I also want to recognise him as a friend and speak about him as a constituent and an activist in the community that I have the pleasure and honour to represent.

For all the time I have been in parliament, Al Grassby was a constituent of mine and an active member of the Labor Party. He was president of one of the local branches in my area. In fact, six weeks before his death, the last time I saw him—after he had been very sick and had just come out of hospital—he was chairing a meeting of the Belconnen branch of the Labor Party in his usual colourful manner. It was a successful branch and it always delivered a good vote for the Labor Party in the region, so I have all sorts of reasons to be grateful to Al.

But like most people of my generation—although I noticed with pleasure Al’s victory in 1969, it was pretty remote from Western Australia and was not something with which I was particularly involved or engaged—Al really came to attention as a figure changing the public
debate in Australia when, as the minister for immigration in the Whitlam government, he led the debate on multiculturalism. Thirty years later that debate is still substantially in the form that Al Grassby set down 30 years ago. It was a very inspiring time and he gave, with Gough Whitlam, great leadership on that issue.

What is underestimated and under remarked upon, although it has been commented on in this debate, is his continuing role, after that time, as Commissioner for Community Relations. He made a very substantial contribution to combating prejudice and racism in our country, and that is very noteworthy. I do not particularly want to speak about Al the national figure at great length, but I do want to make sure those things are noted.

There has been, in recent times, controversy since Al’s death. People have tried to use the opportunity that his death gives them to say things that defamation laws might have prevented them from saying before. I simply want to say that we need to remember a little bit of Shakespeare. He put some words into the mouth of Mark Antony about Julius Caesar. These words concluded with the phrase:

… the good is oft interred with their bones.

I do not want the debate about Al Grassby and his contribution to be diverted into some of the little sordid exercises we have seen in the media recently. We need to lift our eyes to the horizon and say: ‘Like all of us, Al was not perfect; he was a colourful character, and we’re all flawed.’ He made an enormous national contribution, and our focus should be on that and the positive role that he played. I was proud to call him my friend for all the time that I have known him—nearly 30 years.

Today I also want to mark my recognition of Al in the community here in Canberra. He was quietly active—which sounds uncharacteristic for Al, because he was not renowned for his quietness. But while he was a high-profile public figure—and everybody remembers the famous lunches he used to have and the debates that took place at them, and the community of kindred spirits he generated around those things—he was also quietly active on behalf of a lot of important causes and doing work on behalf of a lot of individuals who needed assistance and did not have anywhere else to turn. He and Ellnor were often the people to whom they turned, and they did substantial good work in the community.

My brief really today is to say this is a man who deserves to be remembered and recognised, one, for a brief and effective period as minister for immigration which changed the nature of public debate and public policy in this country forever; two, as a man who, as Commissioner for Community Relations, carried on that task in a way that was not so significantly recognised; and, three, nationally continued to be a person of substance. Sometimes his colourful character and dress sense diverted attention from the substance: his contribution to multiculturalism, his contribution as Commissioner for Community Relations, his commitment to individual and collective rights issues. I would not want that to go unremarked. He was colourful and he enjoyed being colourful, but beneath that there was real substance. I want to recognise him as a friend and as a colleague, and thank him for his contribution to my community.

I want to conclude by saying something about Ellnor Grassby. It is a very rare, if not unique, thing which occurred. Al had been a minister in the Whitlam government; Ellnor Grassby was subsequently a minister in the Follett Labor government in the ACT. I cannot
bring to mind another example of partners who have both been ministers in different governments—in fact, the Grassbys served 20 years apart. There might be a precedent, but I am not aware of it. You may take the Lyons precedent, but I think there are some significant differences. But certainly it is a very significant, if not unique, achievement.

Ellnor has been and remains a very substantial public figure here in Canberra. She has played a very positive role and she has been very active in the Labor Party and continues to be. I expect to see her at the conference this year, as I have seen her year after year for the last 20 years or so. Locally, across the territory and nationally she is also a person who has made a contribution. I had the opportunity on the day of the funeral and in a note subsequently to express my condolences to Ellnor and all the other members of the family. I welcome the opportunity to reiterate them publicly here and to thank Ellnor for her contribution. Not that her contribution is over—I expect her to continue to make a substantial and positive contribution for many years to come.

The parliament should recognise the great contributions of former members, former ministers and former distinguished figures in our community. Al Grassby was all of those things.

**Mr Griffin (Bruce) (11.10 am)**—We are reflecting here today on the life of Al Grassby, a former member of this parliament and a former minister in the Whitlam government. Al was a man who in many ways was seen as representing much about the time in which he lived and, in particular, some of the issues that he faced as a parliamentarian and a member of that government. It is unusual to have a condolence motion for a minister being debated here in the Main Committee, particularly for someone who was a minister for a very short time. But I guess what you could say about Al Grassby is that he was not here for a long time but he was here for a good time. Certainly he used his time to good effect in many respects. He was a member of parliament for only nine years, and that was across state and federal spheres, and he was in the federal parliament for two terms. Other speakers have reflected on the detail of that time so I will keep my comments to a few impressions.

Probably more than almost any other minister, Al was seen to represent and reflect how a lot of people saw the Whitlam government—both its best aspects and what were seen as some of its problems. He was flamboyant, there is no doubt about it: everyone has a story about Al in terms of some of the clothes he wore, particularly the ties and the suits. He was passionate in his beliefs: in his time working within government, every day was a day to do something and every day was a day to achieve something. Australia was then facing a time of social change, coming out of the sixties. And it is fair to say that, in his portfolio of Immigration, Al took on issues of immigration and multiculturalism that were indicative of some of those social changes. There has been considerable debate about his legacy—as there is about the Whitlam government as a whole—and about what he achieved and what he was responsible for. But I think what we can agree on is that he did a lot in the time that he had and that, overwhelmingly, his parliamentary legacy was positive.

Multiculturalism as Al talked about it and as he represented it, and as those of us who believe in it see it, is a positive thing. It is about celebrating diversity, it is about empowering people, it is about giving people the support they need to realise their potential. Much of what he did as a minister and much of what he did and spoke of, post that time, in his work as Commissioner for Community Relations and in relation to the Racial Discrimination Act made very concrete contributions on those issues. That is a very positive legacy. Beyond that,
the interesting thing about Al is that he did not just fade away. In that way he was like the Whitlam government: it may not have had a long reign but its influence in Australian society was there for all to see for a lot longer—and it is still there today.

So much more happened to Al post his time in the parliament—some of it not so positive; some of it quite distressing in many ways. Still in the context of championing those issues that he was identified with in parliament, he remained a persuasive public figure and achieved many things. He is also a bloke I respected for a particular reason. Quite often when people get out of politics that is the last you see of them. Quite often they end up being more of a critic about what they were formerly a part of than someone who actually maintains a belief in the legacy. Al Grassby was someone who maintained his involvement with the Labor Party right the way through those years. He was often at functions. He was always around. I have always respected that.

I remember back in 1997 when I was responsible with the late Greg Wilton for organising a party function in Melbourne to celebrate 25 years since the election of the Whitlam government. As we looked at who we could get to come along to celebrate that occasion, from Gough all the way down, one of the first names that sprung to mind was Al Grassby, and one of the first people to accept was Al Grassby. He was one of a number of figures from that government that helped make that night a very special occasion. There was a huge crowd and he was a big part of the drawing power of what made it a very special night. In the years after that you would still see him around and you could still say he was—and always will be—seen as a figure of significance within the history of the Labor Party.

I would like to pass on my respects to his family and to those he was close to, and recognise here in the parliament that this was a man who gave his all in the time that he had and used that time well. This is a man who can be proud of a number of the issues he championed and of the way he progressed the development of Australia into a modern multicultural society. Whatever has happened since and whatever may happen in the future, his legacy maintains itself in a manner which he, those around him and those who loved him can be justifiably proud.

Mr LAURIE FERGUSON (Reid) (11.17 am)—At the outset I would like to briefly touch on another matter, and I do not think Al Grassby would be critical of this, given his own authorship of a number of publications regarding the massacres of Indigenous people in this country and his deep interest in that area. I want to join with the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition who, yesterday, recognised the unfortunate death of Christine Jacobs, who was to be a star speaker at the National Day of Healing yesterday and about whom a very brief film was shown which incorporated her journey from depression, surrender and defeat to a willingness to reach out and to forgive white people for what happened in this country.

I want to also briefly mention the address by Professor Fiona Stanley, the 2003 Australian of the Year, who gave a very graphic demonstration of the suffering of Aboriginal people as a result of the seizure by various state authorities of their children. Very clear psychiatric and health issues have become recognised in those communities as a result, and very strong resilience is evident in the community.

As I say, I do not think my mentioning this matter is remiss because Al Grassby did have a deep interest in the area of Indigenous people in this country. And that is one of the points to
make at the outset: certainly, he was the harbinger of a very major change in the involvement and empowerment of the newer communities after the Second World War. He was deeply interested in the Irish contribution to this country and also, as I say, Indigenous Australians.

My first memory of Al Grassby is as a young kid going up to state parliament in New South Wales when he represented the state electorate of Murrumbidgee. The room was about half the size of this area and it was shared by 10 or 15 members of parliament and they essentially had one or two amanuenses, as they were called, doing their typing. So it was a very closely knit group of Labor Party politicians. Al was always a very jovial and friendly guy, always giving kids who came to the state parliament a few bucks, and that typified him. I recently spoke to a mutual friend and asked her what would be the main characteristic she would stress about him. I would say it was a non-judgmental style. He basically never attacked people, he never saw wrong in them. He always sought to recognise the good aspects in them and was non-judgmental.

Al should be recognised as having a very broad career which involved working with the British Army’s infantry and intelligence corps. His work in agriculture encompassed work with the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the UN and an attachment for a while to the United States Department of Agriculture, so he had a very deep involvement in rural and agricultural matters. That was why he was able to become a representative of the Murrumbidgee area in both the state and federal area. That is not to say it was the worst area electorally for Labor, but it typifies the ability of the state party in New South Wales to represent rural and regional areas. Al’s ability to represent that seat and hold those areas was recognition of his deep involvement in agricultural issues, his previous career and his knowledge.

But the central contribution by Grassby was indeed about multiculturalism. As one example of what he has accomplished in this country, I recently attended—as is my wont—a Sikh function in Sydney that the community put on concerning politics and their involvement in this country. The member for Mitchell was in attendance, as was the Attorney-General. The member for Mitchell tried to make a competition out of which side of politics it was that created multiculturalism. I thought it very interesting that he sought, in that constituency, to establish that the Liberal Party were the initiators of multiculturalism. There is some argument that the embryonic movements did occur under them. I find this the absolute pinnacle of acceptance of Grassby’s contribution.

Let us look at the history. In 1996 when the Howard government were elected, one of the first roles they undertook was to review whether we should use the word ‘multiculturalism’. They actually had a subliminal, subterranean message to the electorate that multiculturalism was very doubtful, trendoid, inner city stuff. They set up an inquiry to see whether they would keep using the word. After a significant investigation into the realities of our country, the committee recommended to the current government that the term be kept. That recommendation was adopted. It is very interesting that in this area, which was in a way divided around settlement, immigration and multiculturalism, the member for Mitchell—who is not regarded as being on the radical left of the Liberal Party—went into that Sikh constituency to seek to prove his bona fides on multiculturalism. I think that is a very good indication of what Grassby accomplished in this country.

The previous speaker, the member for Bruce, referred to him as a person that did not abandon politics and interest in issues after he left this place. He did not decry his former involve-
ments or say that others had done worse than he had. I met Al on many occasions because of his involvement in various ethnic communities in Sydney. Whether it was a Pilipino, Thai or Arabic function, over the years he was an honoured guest. Some of the people running these organisations on occasions did not share his political beliefs, but he was recognised by them as the person who first stood up for their right to have real power and real participation in our society.

The Whitlam government has often been mentioned in the context of Western Sydney. The issues of educational access, which finally led to the University of Western Sydney, sewerage and so on essentially brought Western Sydney into the political power structure. Previously it had been ignored. The area was very largely working class. It was Whitlam coming from Cabramatta and representing the area that changed things. But at the same time, the other defining change of power in this country was the realisation of the rights of the postwar communities to involvement, consultation and a real role in our society. That is what really came through. We might have had a councillor in our area called Pavesi in the late 19th or early 20th century who was of Italian extraction and who became mayor of Holroyd, but if you look down the various lists of council mayors and aldermen over the years, you will find they were predominantly Anglo-Saxon. I think Al went out there and encouraged people, in a deeper sense, to realise that they were part of society and should have a significant say in it.

I refer to the comments of Mark Lopez in the work *The Origins of Multiculturalism in Australian Politics 1945-1975*:

Grassby brought a number of qualities to his role as Minister that had a significant impact on subsequent events. His approach to many issues was often to reduce them to a form where it seemed that his position was simply one of commonsense and ethical decency. Consequently, he could take stands on issues with great moral passion. Furthermore, Grassby was a patriotic Australian but also irreverent and mischievously provocative when it came to offending conservative sensitivities, such as his garish taste in clothes et cetera and cosmopolitan appreciation of ethnic cultures.

Al Grassby had a central role in changing the society. It is something that will not be reversed and has been taken up, initially with reluctance, by the current government. His ideas are also part of the settlement processes for new arrivals and, no matter how much we disagree with the current government on immigration resettlement, we have to say that our provision of settlement service is still regarded by many Western nations as the one to follow. In recent years, there has been a retreat from involvement by volunteers in church groups and NGOs who previously helped new arrivals because of the paperwork demands of the department. There have been peaks and troughs in arrivals which mean that groups helping them often cannot plan properly. In general, Australia’s settlement process is first-rate and is part of the legacy which Al Grassby left to this country.

I express my regrets to his family. I recognise his role both in parliament and afterwards in enriching, empowering and involving non-English-speaking background Australians. Many members of this House do not have this political involvement. There is a band of electorates in this country where Lions Clubs and Rotary might not be active but where, every weekend, we are involved at four or five ethnic community events. Before Grassby, this was not the way politics operated. The establishment was Anglo-Saxon and outside that the average politician was not involved. I appreciate the opportunity to speak in memory of Al Grassby.

Debate (on motion by Mr Ticehurst) adjourned.
His Holiness Pope John Paul II

Debate resumed from 10 May, on motion by Mr Abbott:

That the House take note of the paper.

Mr DANBY (Melbourne Ports) (11.27 am)—It is appropriate that the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition lead this parliament’s reflections on the death of Pope John Paul II. John Paul was the leader of the world’s one billion Catholics for almost 27 years, the longest papacy of modern times and the third longest in the 2,000-year history of the church. He exercised, in my view, a greater influence on world events than any other recent religious leader. It is fitting that the House notes his passing and reflects on the place he occupies in the history of our time.

As the only Jewish member of this House and perhaps the only member who is an adherent to a non-Christian religion, I wish to chronicle some remarks about this pope, the first pope who stood inside a synagogue since Peter. When Cardinal Karol Wojtyla, Archbishop of Cracow, was elected pope in October 1978, there was some unease around the world about his election. Poland had been the scene of a long and unhappy history of anti-Semitism, fostered for many years by the teachings and actions of the Catholic church. Poland was the scene for the murder of more than three million Jews by the Nazis. Although many Poles risked their lives saving individual Jews during the holocaust, it is a sad fact that the Nazis chose Poland to carry out this vast criminal enterprise.

John Paul II turned out to be a man of greater vision and courage than he was given credit for at the time of his election. Despite his conservatism on many issues, he was a child of the Second Vatican Council. He fully supported the church’s historic declaration Nostra Aetate of 1965 which repudiated Catholicism’s traditional view that the Jews had killed Jesus Christ and that Jewish people were collectively and eternally responsible for this. This declaration condemned anti-Semitism and apologised to the Jewish people for church’s historic fostering of anti-Semitism.

What those who feared a Polish papacy did not realise was that Karol Wojtyla had never forgotten the terrible things that took place around him in his youth. Wadowice, the town near Cracow where he grew up, was more than 25 per cent Jewish when Karol was a child. He grew up with Jews, he lived in the same street as Jews and went to school with Jews. One of these was Jerzy Kluger, a Jew who many years later would play a key role as a go-between for John Paul II and Israel when the Vatican established diplomatic relations. Many years later, Kluger told the New York Times that the young Karol often went to the Kluger’s apartment overlooking the town square and listened to music performed by a string quartet comprising two Jews and two Catholics. ‘Previous popes did not know Jews,’ Jerzy Kluger told the New York Times, ‘but this pope is a friend of the Jewish people, because he knows Jewish people.’

In 1939 the Germans occupied Poland. In the next four years the great majority of Wadowice Jews were transported to the nearby Auschwitz-Birkenau extermination camp, where they were killed. The young Wojtyla, meanwhile, went to work in a stone quarry and later a chemical factory, thus avoiding being deported as a slave labourer for Germany. At the same time, he secretly studied for the priesthood. He knew the Jews of Wadowice were being deported to their deaths and, while he survived the war himself, most of the people whom he
knew from that background in his youth did not. It might be said that, in many ways, he spent the rest of his life atoning for the fact that he survived but his friends did not.

In the years between the Second World War and his election as Pope, Father Wojtyla was more concerned with saving the Polish Catholic Church, which suffered decades of persecution under the communist regime of Wladyslaw Gomulka, which Stalin imposed on Poland after the war. Poland remained a Catholic country under the rule of an atheist regime, and life for Catholics there was not easy. Wojtyla became a bishop in 1958 and the Archbishop of Cracow in 1963. He became known as one of the brightest of the church’s new generation of leaders and was made cardinal in 1967. The communists certainly underestimated him when they described him as a ‘poet and a dreamer’, just as Stalin’s contemptuous comment on ‘how many divisions does the Pope have’ was certainly a profound misjudgment of Catholicism.

He attended the Second Vatican Council and, while he was not among the most outspoken reformers, he supported the reforms made by the council, including some of the changes I have spoken about. Once he became Pope, however, John Paul moved rapidly to change the relationship between the Catholic Church and the Jewish community. These relations were in an unhappy state, not least in Rome, where the inaction of Pope Pius XII when the Nazis deported the majority of Roman Jews to their deaths in 1943 was remembered with great bitterness. At an international level, the refusal of the Vatican to recognise Israel was also an unresolved problem. John Paul II took immediate steps to confront this situation, although it took a while to overcome the resistance of some in the institution he represented and, frankly, some of the suspicion in the Jewish community.

John Paul II was the master of dramatic gesture. The first of these occurred during his 1979 tour of Poland, which did so much to undermine the communist regime in his homeland. John Paul went to Auschwitz and knelt in prayer there, making it clear that he was praying for millions of Jews who had died there. His next great gesture was to visit the Great Synagogue in Rome, where he embraced the Chief Rabbi of Rome, Elio Toaff, and spoke of the ‘irrevocable covenant’ between God and the Jews. He explicitly renounced and apologised for the church’s history of anti-Semitism. He said: ‘With Judaism we have a relationship that we do not have with any other religion. You are our dearly beloved brothers, and in a certain way it may be said that you are our elder brothers.’ I will return to that in a minute.

In 1985 the Church, on John Paul’s instructions, published, Notes on the correct way to present the Jews and Judaism in preaching and catechesis in the Roman Catholic Church, an effort to correct generations of myths and stereotypes which continued to be propagated in some places in Catholic education. In 1998 he went further when the Church’s Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews, headed by Australia’s Cardinal Edward Idris Cassidy, who is owed great credit for this great reconciliation between the two faiths over the last decades, produced a publication We remember: a reflection on the Shoah. This document said of the behaviour of Catholics during the Holocaust years:

The spiritual resistance and concrete action of Christians was not that which might have been expected from Christ’s followers. We cannot know how many Christians in countries occupied or ruled by the Nazi powers or their allies were horrified at the disappearance of their Jewish neighbours and yet were not strong enough to raise their voices in protest. For Christians, this heavy burden of conscience of their brothers and sisters during the Second World War must be a call to penitence. We deeply regret the errors and failures of those sons and daughters of the Church.

MAIN COMMITTEE
Finally, in 1993, John Paul agreed to the establishment of diplomatic relations between the Vatican City state and the state of Israel. The Vatican’s longstanding position was that the city should be placed under a form of international sovereignty. Israel’s position was that it would never give up Jerusalem, its capital and location of its holiest sites, reunited under Israeli rule in 1967. Eventually the Vatican redefined its position, to one of asking for ‘international guarantees’ for the security of Christian sites and Christian communities in Jerusalem.

In 2000 the Pope visited Israel. He went to the Holocaust museum at Yad Vashem and saw for himself what had happened to the Jews of his Polish homeland as well as the rest of Europe. He visited the Western Wall of the Jewish Temple, where he submitted a written prayer, called kvitel, which he placed in the wall, as Jews have done for many centuries. Karol Wojtyla said in that note:

We are deeply saddened by the behaviour of those who in the course of history have caused these children of yours to suffer, and asking your forgiveness, we wish to commit ourselves to genuine brotherhood with People of the Covenant.

All of these actions and words had the effect of vastly improving relations between the Catholic Church and Jewish communities around the world, including in Australia, but they have been paralleled by other actions, which sometimes have not always led to an easy relationship, such as the canonisation of Archbishop Cardinal Stepinac, the canonisation of Edith Stein, a Jewish convert to Catholicism, who died in Auschwitz because she was born a Jew, and a few other issues that have caused upset. The canonisation of the prejudiced Pius IX, in particular, was one that caused difficulty.

But today is not a time for reflection on these difficult issues. In the view of most Jewish leaders, in my view, the positive contributions of John Paul II to reconciliation between Catholics and Jews far outweighs any negative factors which still operate. Israel’s official reaction to John Paul’s death was that ‘Israel, the Jewish people and the entire world lost today a great champion of reconciliation and brotherhood between the faiths’. A leading US Jewish civil rights organisation said:

It is safe to say that more change for the better took place in his Papacy than in the nearly 2,000 years before.

When Karol Wojtyla was elected Pope in 1978, many Polish Catholics believed that it was literally a miracle—that John Paul was God’s chosen instrument for delivering Poland from oppression and restoring its freedom and independence. I am not qualified to read the mind of the Almighty, but there is no doubt that John Paul’s election was a decisive turning point in the overthrow of the communist regime in Poland, which in turn was the first vital step in bringing down the whole Soviet empire, culminating in the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991—I would say ‘the welcome dissolution’ from the point of view of probably all people in this parliament.

For that reason, if no other, John Paul II deserves to be ranked with Woodrow Wilson, Franklin Roosevelt, Winston Churchill, Mahatma Gandhi and Nelson Mandela as among the greatest political and moral leaders of the 20th century. One consequence of the fall of the Soviet Union and the ending of restrictions on Jewish emigration has been that millions of Jews have left the Soviet Union over the past 15 years. Many have gone to Israel and the United States. Many have settled in my electorate and enriched the local culture, as have tens of thousands of Poles who have come to Australia as a result of the persecution under the
communist regime in Poland. I count many of them, including Adam Warzel and his wife, Margaret—the former leaders of Solidarity in Australia—as close personal friends.

My praise of the historic role of John Paul II does not mean that I agree with everything that he said and the people the Church has canonised since. Many people in my electorate object pretty strongly to some of his positions on issues such as abortion and homosexuality and I respect their views. The opposition of the Catholic Church to the use of condoms to prevent the spread of HIV is a difficult issue for many people, particularly in view of the terrible situation in Africa, and it is a position which I respectfully suggest the church should reconsider.

Even allowing for these matters of dissent, I think most Australians, whatever their religious views, will acknowledge that John Paul II was a man who changed the course of history, both in his native land and on the world stage. His contribution to opposing anti-Semitism and bringing about reconciliation between Catholics and Jews was but one manifestation of his wisdom, courage and vision, albeit one close to my heart. I sincerely mourn his passing and hope that his successor, Pope Benedict XVI, will continue along the path he pioneered. I am pleased that two friends from Sydney, the members for Lowe and Kingsford Smith, are present today for this reflection on the spiritual and temporal greatness of John Paul II.

Mr HUNT (Flinders—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for the Environment and Heritage) (11.40 am)—I rise to express my condolences to members of the Catholic Church and to express my thanks for the life and work of Pope John Paul II, who passed away on 2 April 2005. In speaking about Pope John Paul II, I want to address his work and legacy in three parts: I would like to talk, firstly, about Karol Wojtyla the man; secondly, about his global legacy as a pope who championed individual freedom, religious freedom and the notion of a fair and just society; and, thirdly, about the contribution his legacy has made to Catholic education in my own electorate of Flinders with its many Catholic schools and the role they play.

I want to honour and express gratitude for the contribution made by Karol Wojtyla, the man, to the world and to the Church. Karol Jozef Wojtyla was born in Poland in 1920. He was the second of two sons and by the age of 21 he was the only surviving member of his family. His mother died in 1929, his brother in 1932 and his father in 1941. He lived in difficult times. He passed through the cauldron of the Second World War. He saw what the excesses of Nazism and the communist takeover of the Eastern bloc from 1945 onwards did to ordinary people. He saw the impact on their lives, their freedoms, their ability to worship and their ability to carry out the very basics of daily existence. That helped shape his beliefs, his attitudes and his passion for life. All of those things helped shape a man who, as the century wore on, imprinted his role, his views and his commitment to ordinary individuals around the world in a way which was perhaps unsurpassed by any global religious leader during the 20th century.

Karol Wojtyla was elected as Pope in 1978. His work was pastoral work writ large across the world. He completed 104 pastoral visits outside Italy, made 38 official visits, had 738 audiences and meetings with heads of state, and 246 audiences and meetings with prime ministers. These are small things, but his great work was with ordinary people. It is estimated that he individually met or greeted over 17 million people. He perhaps came face to face with
more individuals around the world than almost any other figure in history. Above all, he was a spiritual leader for one billion Catholic followers. He carried authority, firstly, of course, through his position but, secondly, through his role as an individual. It was that role, that personal sense, which expanded his ability to have an influence on the world.

It is significant that he chose to be a friend to all Christian denominations. He was not just leader of the Catholic Church but a binding and unifying force with the entire Christian world. He reached beyond that across the faiths to Judaism—as the member for Melbourne Ports noted—to Islam and to many others. It was a very significant indication of the way in which religion at its best can be a healing and unifying force. As an individual he was a man of enormous generosity. He was a great religious leader, a man of strength, inspiration and conviction. This was perhaps never demonstrated more strongly than by the way in which he joined the hands of Mehmet Ali Agca who had attempted to assassinate him in 1981. He forgave him and visited him in prison. That was a true act of Christian generosity.

The second element beyond the man was his global legacy. I wish to look at, firstly, his impact on freedom and, secondly, his impact on interfaith dialogue. In looking at freedom, what we see is a man who came from Poland, who visited Poland and whose election by the congregation of cardinals was a vote in favour of freedom. He gave Poland an extraordinary sense of self-worth and the capacity to stand as a country based on freedoms. When he met with and effectively gave support to Lech Walesa and the Solidarnosc movement, he was saying, ‘The world stands behind you and I, as a Pole originally and as a religious leader, stand behind you for those freedoms.’ That was a powerful symbol.

It was perhaps the beginning of the end for communism. Poland was the vanguard in bringing down the control of the Soviet Union across Eastern Europe. That vanguard spread to other areas, other states and other movements within Eastern Europe. Through the course of the 1980s, his strength and the message that he gave to the Polish people and the message that he gave to the world combined with other historic forces. Together they helped to produce a push for change and for courage by individuals which, in turn, helped bring down the tight controls over the Eastern bloc. This helped lead to the destruction of the Soviet Union, helped lead to the freeing of the peoples of Eastern Europe and helped create a new world, which is a very different place without that threat of global cataclysm. That is an extraordinary thing.

That was the first of the two great legacies. The second, as I mentioned before, was his commitment to reaching across religious divides within the Christian church and between the Christian church and other faiths. Within the Christian church, Anglicanism, more generally Protestantism, orthodox—all were brought closer to Catholicism through the work of Pope John Paul II. In addition, Judaism, Islam and other faiths were also subject to approaches by Pope John Paul II and the way in which he brought the faiths of the world together. That is an abiding contribution.

At a global level he played a significant role. His visits around the world helped to spread that message. He came to Australia in 1986 and 1995. I remember being, by chance, stopped on one side of a road as he passed through Melbourne in 1986 and seeing the Popemobile glide past. People everywhere were touched by the humanity of the individual. And it also means that, at the street level, Catholic schools have experienced a renaissance over the last 20 years. Within my own electorate of Flinders these have included: St Mary’s Catholic school, led by Richard Mucha; St John’s Catholic school, led by Monica Coyle; St Brendan’s,
led by Desmond Noack; Our Lady of Fatima, led by Philip O’Gorman; St Joseph’s Catholic school, led by Tony Breen; St Joseph’s Catholic school, led by Simon Dell’oro; and Padua College in Rosebud, led by Carmel Reznicsek. All of these schools make enormous contributions, and they have been led by and inspired by the work of Pope John Paul. He has helped to give them additional strength and additional legitimacy. That interplay between the role of a great religious leader and practical implementation and teaching at the community level is something which we should acknowledge. I thank all of those principals and all of their schools for the work that they contribute in teaching values at the local level.

In conclusion, the death of Pope John Paul marks the passing of a man whose life has been imprinted and writ large upon the world. As an individual, he was a symbol of generosity and forgiveness; as a religious leader, he helped breach divides within and across the faiths. As a religious leader, he also had a massive role in the great global challenge of bringing freedoms during the latter part of the 20th century. His was one of the indispensable contributions towards bringing down the impact of communism across Eastern Europe. There can be no doubt about that. The history, the lines, the stories and the influences are clear. For all of those reasons I wish to honour the life of Pope John Paul. I wish to honour and respect the work of the Catholic education institutions within the electorate of Flinders. Above all else, I want to give thanks for his work and his life.

Mr MURPHY (Lowe) (11.50 am)—I may speak for each of us when I say that there has been no more influential leader in the 21st century than His Holiness the late Pope John Paul II. It is perhaps fortuitous that the greatness of Pope John Paul II was not fully appreciated by most of us until his death on 2 April this year. It was not until we participated in his last days by seeing his suffering from a combination of debilitating illnesses, including the effects of Parkinson’s disease, that we realised the legacy of Pope John Paul II. In those days we saw the truth of Christ’s suffering personified in this great man as he, too, carried the cross.

Pope John Paul II was the very personification of the meaning of the words ‘vocation’ and ‘profession’. The word ‘profession’ is linked to the meaning of ‘to profess’. Pope John Paul II professed his vocation as the supreme pontiff of the world’s largest church, the Catholic Church. His influence was pervasive. He personified in his profession the greatest virtues of leadership. These virtues include the natural virtues of kindness in his dealings with others, including other faiths; magnanimity in proclaiming the faith of the Catholic Church; and courage against the continuing attacks against the truth. Yet the legacy of Pope John Paul II is more patently exemplified in his supernatural virtues. His Holiness is best remembered for his undying and eternal hope—hope for the future, hope for the world and hope for each one of us. Armed with the two affiliated virtues of faith and hope, he was the personification of love, charity and justice.

I say all of this by way of background. We, who call ourselves public leaders, can do no better for our own moral and cultural development than to take stock of the achievements of this great man. Indeed, I can safely say that Pope John Paul II achieved the high accolade of being in the top three of all 265 popes. He is also quickly being recognised as one of the greatest leaders in all history, so pervasive has been his influence in church and secular affairs. Never before has any person achieved so much by way of bringing unity, peace and joy into the world.
Pope John Paul II will be remembered as a pope for the youth of the world. Far from turning youth away from the church, he has rejuvenated the church in ways which are only now starting to be understood and appreciated. For all those detractors who bemoan the state of the Catholic Church by pointing to falling church attendances, the fall in priestly vocations and other doom and gloom statistics, I make the point that these are false indicators. The Catholic Church—one of the most persecuted religions in the world—is growing, despite attacks upon it, which His Holiness Pope John Paul II embraced in a spirit of sacramental suffering.

We in parliament, and all other people of goodwill, can do no better than take the time to read and learn from the substantial legacy of materials written by Pope John Paul II. Many of these texts are not just clever words or religionised idioms. The literary, canonical and theological philosophy is of value to every person and I encourage every member of the House and every other person to take the time to become familiar with the writings of Pope John Paul II. There are very few people in history who can lay claim to such a compendium of texts. The requiem mass obituary for Pope John Paul II at St Mary’s Cathedral, Sydney, notes that these texts include 14 encyclicals—that is, circulars of the Church on foundational moral teachings. He also wrote 15 apostolic exhortations, 11 apostolic constitutions and 45 apostolic letters.

The Pope also published five books: Crossing the Threshold of Hope, October 1994; Gift and Mystery: On the 50th Anniversary of My Priestly Ordination, November 1996; Roman Triptych: Meditations, a book of poems, March 2003; Rise, Let Us Be On Our Way, May 2004; and Memory and Identity, 2005. Pope John Paul II presided over 147 beatification ceremonies and saw 1,338 blessed proclaimed, including Australia’s Mother Mary MacKillop, sister of the Josephite order in Australia. For the benefit of the Minister for Human Services, the member for North Sydney, her shrine is located in the federal seat of North Sydney. Pope John Paul II held nine consistories in which he created 231 cardinals plus an additional cardinal in pectore. He also convened six plenary meetings of the College of Cardinals during his pontificate.

However, it is in his outreach to people that Pope John Paul II will be remembered. More than 17,600,000 pilgrims participated in the general audiences held in the Vatican on Wednesdays. There were more than five million in attendance at his funeral and some eight million pilgrims attended the Great Jubilee in Rome in 2000. We remember Pope John Paul II for his travelling and his outreach in taking the papacy to the world. In his pontificate, Pope John Paul II made 38 official visits, held some 738 audiences and meetings with heads of state and 246 audiences and meetings with prime ministers. Over 100 heads of state attended the funeral of Pope John Paul II, a legacy that represents a mark of respect that no other leader, secular or otherwise, will probably ever reach.

It will interest this parliament to know that the Vatican City now has the largest diplomatic mission in the world, surpassing even those of the United States of America and China. Far from being a wilting church, the church in the 21st century is vibrant, growing and living, thanks to the life of Pope John Paul II. Despite ever more vitriolic attacks against it, the Catholic Church holds a deposit of faith more closely than ever. Moreover, it was Pope John Paul II who courageously proclaimed that faith and truth have led the world out of its confusion, its darkness and the lies and distortions of the current wave of historical revisionism.
It is with these delusions and lies in mind that perhaps the greatest legacy of Pope John Paul II’s reign becomes apparent—that is, the legacy found in his successor, Pope Benedict XVI. It is very important for this parliament, the people of Australia and indeed the whole world to be reminded of the great affinity and love Pope John Paul II had for Pope Benedict XVI, formerly Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger. Cardinal Ratzinger has been described as the ‘right-hand man’ of the Pope during the reign of John Paul II. Cardinal Ratzinger was very much the technician and the theologian but also had a very kind heart.

Amongst the many things that could be spoken of in discussing the relationship between John Paul II and Cardinal Ratzinger, as he was then known, are the events of 1986, which this parliament would do well to observe and study assiduously. The opening remarks by Pope John Paul II in his Apostolic Constitution *Fidei Depositum*—the Deposit of Faith—note that John Paul II entrusted Cardinal Ratzinger to empanel a commission of 12 cardinals and bishops, chaired by Cardinal Ratzinger. The task of this commission was to prepare a draft of the catechism requested by the synod fathers. The final product was the work of these church leaders, assisted by an editorial committee of another seven bishops and other experts. I say this to highlight the legacy of Pope John Paul II and to say that this legacy lives in the living memory of Pope Benedict XVI. The Deposit of Faith and its more accurate expression is a direct result of the collective wisdom of the leadership of John Paul II and the current Pope, Benedict XVI. It is a masterful work, guided truly by the Holy Spirit and worthy of careful reading and analysis.

Australia needs the instruction of Pope John Paul II as reflected in his writings, his works and his zeal for life and for souls at a time in this parliament where the ethics of our law making becomes ever more utilitarian and hedonistic, driven by short-sighted populism and financial imperatives. The legacy of the many writings of Pope John Paul II sheds authoritative light and direction for our guidance. Perhaps more importantly, we in this parliament and others in society can learn from the example of Pope John Paul II in how to reach out to others, how to listen and how to overcome our individualism and pride which plague contemporary society.

In doing so, we can only aspire to be filled with the hope of love and charity and sense of justice that Pope John Paul II gave to the sick, to the poor, to the Third World, to those of non-Catholic and non-baptised religions, to those secular states that are no longer or never were confessional states and to those who suffer from war or sickness or the shame of their fallen states. I was particularly touched by the contribution made earlier this morning in this House by my friend the member for Melbourne Ports, Mr Michael Danby. I encourage people to read his contribution.

I conclude with the hope that it is within our grasp to make use of the works and texts of Pope John Paul II. Within the next seven years we should, God willing, see his beatification and canonisation as a saint of the church. It would not be speculative of me to also predict that Pope John Paul II will also be given the title of ‘Great’, being only the third pope in history to be accorded the title of Saint Pope John Paul the Great. Those are the honorifics of a man who may be called unique. We cannot but take heed of him who led this church on the world diplomatic stage for the last 26 years. Let us remember him well. He has served us and the world as his official title says: the Servant of the Servants of God, for Everlasting Memory. May he rest in peace.
Mr SLIPPER (Fisher) (12.01 pm)—I would like to associate myself with the condolence motion moved in relation to the passing of His Holiness Pope John Paul II. No pope in history had as big an impact on the world as did His Holiness. He was elected to the papacy in an election inspired by the Holy Spirit in October 1978 and served for many years until 2 April this year. He was chosen following the short papacy of John Paul I, and to indicate continuity he adopted the name John Paul II. He wanted to honour his predecessor and to indicate that he would not be making any major policy shifts.

His Holiness John Paul II was the first non-Italian to be chosen for this high office in over 400 years. His predecessor as a non-Italian was Hadrian V1 in 1563, who was a Dutchman. Reports indicate the election of a non-Italian pope may have been encouraged by the growing influence of Catholics from outside the continent of Europe. It is interesting to note that the largest congregations of Roman Catholics throughout the world are situated outside Europe. Personally, I believe it is particularly healthy when candidates from any nationality are able to be considered on their merits for appointment as the vicar of Christ on earth.

At the age of 58 His Holiness John Paul II became the youngest pope since Pius IX in 1846. Some of the statistics in relation to His Holiness are absolutely breathtaking. During his 26½ years in the Vatican, Pope John Paul II spoke to over 17½ million pilgrims at his general audiences held each Wednesday. During 2000, he spoke to eight million pilgrims alone. He spoke with countless millions during his international trips. More than any other pope—and I suppose it is partly because of the times—His Holiness was able to visit all parts of the world and was able to become a very real figure in the minds of people around the globe. In my view, His Holiness Pope John II is one of the most significant men of our era. I greatly admire the stands he took and the fact that although he had been subjected during his life to great deprivation and hardship he did not at any time bear any bitterness or ill will.

He had a profound influence on many leaders around the world. Whether or not the leader was a Roman Catholic or even a Christian, when the Pope spoke he was listened to carefully. Not all leaders agreed with the Pope on every occasion, but the Pope was certainly someone whose advice could not be easily ignored. When His Holiness chose to speak then of course people had to consider what he said. He was a head of state in addition to being the head of the largest Christian denomination in the world. He had 38 official visits during his time at the Vatican. He had 738 audiences and meetings with heads of state and 246 audiences with prime ministers from around the world.

For the Catholic Church, Pope John Paul II conducted 104 pastoral visits outside Italy and 146 within Italy. The member for Lowe mentioned the beatification ceremonies presided over by His Holiness. In fact there were 147 of these, in which 1,338 people were raised to the status of blessed, including Blessed Mary MacKillop, who I believe is designated Blessed Mary of the Cross. There were 51 canonisation ceremonies, creating 482 saints, and he held nine consistories, where he created 231 cardinals, including His Eminence Cardinal George Pell of Australia.

The great thing about the Pope was that he appreciated that not everyone in the world was a Roman Catholic and yet he stood very strongly and fearlessly for the maintenance of what he saw as being the doctrines of the faith. He was not a wishy-washy, small ‘i’ liberal sort of prelate. He said what the Catholic Church believed and what you had to do if you were to be a Catholic in good standing. He did not require you to be a Catholic; but he did say that if you...
were a Catholic then these were the things in which you had to believe and this was the sort of life that you had to lead. People, whether Catholic or not, respected his steadfastness, his integrity, his absolute commitment and his determination to stand up for what he considered to be right, regardless of who chose to disagree with him.

There has been mention of the role that he played in bringing down the Iron Curtain and bringing freedom of religion to so many people around the world. It is interesting that religion seems to thrive under persecution. A few years ago I was privileged to be in Cracow, where His Holiness had been an archbishop. When churches in Western Europe and even in Australia are not as full as they could be, it was heartening to see in Poland that the faith was alive and well, perhaps because it had been subjected to some persecution.

His Holiness Pope John Paul II took very strong moral stances. Not everyone accepted his approach to abortion, but he quite correctly took the view that life begins at conception, that human life is entitled to protection and that the sanctity of an unborn child’s life is every bit as important as the sanctity of anyone else’s life. Some people took a different view, but the Pope knew what was right, he stood up and was counted and did not flinch from his position.

His Holiness Pope John was also a person who forgave those who opposed him. He forgave the man who attempted to take his life. We all recall the attempt on his life on 13 May 1981 when he was struck by three bullets. In a demonstration of his diplomacy and love, he said from his hospital bed, ‘Pray for the brother who shot me whom I have sincerely forgiven.’ Quite remarkably, he returned to his work after 22 days of recovery.

The whole world admires the way that His Holiness Pope John Paul II accepted his burden and suffered publicly, particularly during his last illness. The choice of His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI is, in my view, a very fitting tribute to the work carried out by His Holiness Pope John Paul II. I believe that Benedict XVI will maintain his predecessor’s legacy and that there will be continuity at a time when the world is subject to great change.

My colleague the honourable member for Lowe in his contribution mentioned that he hoped that His Holiness Pope John Paul II would be beatified and ultimately made a saint. On the public record, I endorse his sentiments. If there was ever a saint, Pope John Paul II was one, but I do understand that the church needs a number of miracles to be carried out before it can be taken as a sign from God that a person who is a candidate for beatification or sainthood is indeed worthy of that great honour.

I feel particularly humbled to stand in the chamber today to support this motion on the life and work of His Holiness Pope John Paul II. He was a great man. He will never be forgotten. He was, is and will be an inspiration to us all.

Mr HATTON (Blaxland) (12.11 pm)—I am very glad to speak on this motion to take note of the occasion of the death of Karol Wojtyla, Bishop of Cracow and Pope of the Roman Catholic Church for 27 years—the third longest period for any pope and, of course, one of the most significant, at a noble point in the church’s history following the very significant period of Pope John XXIII, particularly the years 1968 and 1969, which were fulcrum years for the Catholic Church. They were years in which there was massive change. During the preceding 400 years, in which the church was almost pickled in aspic, there was virtually no change in its structure, its tenets of belief, its approach to its people and its approach to the world. The popes who had led the church stuck rigidly to the formula that had been adopted. Pope John
XXIII, in convening the Vatican Council and in looking at the past history of the church, introduced enormous change.

One of the people who attended that Vatican Council was a bishop from Poland who, as part of that enclave, saw the dramatic changes that had been unleashed within the church and who, in his pontificate, reacted against a number of the streams of change. He sought, in a highly conservative way, as noted approvingly by the previous speaker, the member for Fisher, to staunch or stop a number of the rivers of change that had been unleashed in the pontificate of Pope John XXIII. Both popes were enormously significant, but both popes ruled over one holy, catholic and apostolic church. They understood their missions in different ways and, indeed, they shaped the Catholic Church and its response to and place within the world in significantly different ways.

I know the depth of change that occurred within the Catholic Church at that period of time and that helped to form the views of Karol Wojtyla that would become his mission, because I have some direct personal sense of it. I was born and brought up a Catholic, attending St Brendans, in central Bankstown, and then De La Salle, at Katoomba, for one year, though my natural place of habitation was in Bankstown up until the end of 1967. But in the critical years of 1968 and 1969 I was in the De La Salle College juniorate at Cronulla in the initial stages of training to become a Catholic teaching brother. I did not pursue that after the end of the juniorate. In 1968 the rule of the old church, the 400 years of the Catholic Church, in which I had grown up, was stolid, rigid, highly hierarchical, absolutely certain of its values and absolutely certain of the manner in which it went about things.

In 1969 all of that was blown apart by the Vatican II council, which Karol Wojtyla took part in. It changed the church from top to bottom and led to a great period of uncertainty for the church’s community of believers. But it also sought to take away the accretions of that previous 400 years of increasing bureaucratisation of the church and to get back to the fundamental bedrock of the church in the first century after Christ and the founding verve and nature of that early church. It also sought to strip away the accretions that had occurred during almost 2,000 years of the papacy and of the church as a hierarchical organisation, in order to re-establish the fundamental principles of the early church in terms of faith and belief. It sought to re-establish the grounding connection between the members of the community of faith which is the Catholic Church and what is at the centre of that: the belief that Christ is the centre of human experience, that he was born, died and gave his life for the redemption of people on this earth, that he was truly the Son of God and that he was God become man to save individual human beings and to create a situation where the world itself could be restored, renewed, refreshed and saved.

What was unleashed by Pope John XXIII was in some ways a wave of uncertainty, because everything that had been there over the previous 400 years had been peeled away and re-examined and reassessed, and it included getting rid of the Latin mass and introducing a mass that would be said in the language of the people concerned, whether in Australia or in Africa or in Latin America. That renewal and revivification of the church was the foundation upon which eventually John Paul came to his pontificate after two intervening popes—Pope Paul VI, who visited Australia, and Pope John Paul I, who was only in the pontificate for about 33 days.
John Paul II was an extremely interesting man—a linguist, an intellectual, someone from a Polish background who had the strength of spirit of his people’s experience, someone who was not just unafraid to confront those with different views within his church but unafraid to confront the full force of Soviet hegemony in his Catholic Poland. I have some sense of the immensity of this because my sister-in-law Ursula, who was born Ursula Radowksi in a German camp at the end of World War II, had Polish parents. They had had to flee Poland not only because of the Nazis but because of the Russians. Many of her relatives could not escape Poland and so, like Karol Wojtyla, grew up in a Poland that was under the iron fist of Soviet hegemony.

For the Poles, always the prisoners of history—prisoners of either Germans or Russians who invaded and conquered them and held them in a position where they could not determine their own future—the spark of their religious belief and the centrality of that to their lives was the one beacon of hope that they could hold onto. It was also, through most of the period in which the Russians controlled not only the Poles but the other peoples of Eastern Europe, the one thing that was completely undervalued by people in the West when it came to looking at the prospects for the end of communism.

I specialised in political science at the University of New South Wales in the study of communism and fascism. The people who ran those courses were extremely good, but they still had a blind spot with regard to the strength of the people’s movements within those areas and how they were grounded in their faith, whether it was ordoxy or Catholicism that was at the centre of that faith. Indeed, when we were trying to work out in the seventies what would happen in Soviet Russia and its empire and whether or not that would survive, whilst people looked very closely at articles such as that produced by Andrei Amalrik when he argued the case for whether or not the USSR would survive until 1984, all of the places that people looked were centred upon the problems of a command economy, the fact that the military nature of Soviet society could well bring it down and create significant problems, and the fact that there was no consumer-driven element to its economies, not at the strength of repressed religious movements within the Soviet empire. When one of the people doing the course presented the case that the foundation stone probably for, first, driving the wedge and then cracking open the Soviet hegemony would be found in the faith of the people and the fact that religion was still a centrepiece for a lot of those people, people just did not believe it.

But Bishop Karol Wojtyla believed it. He not only believed it; in 1979, in his drive as Pope into Poland and his subsequent visits, in a series of 41 seminal speeches in Poland he reigned the sense of Catholic faith and Catholic belief through revisioning the whole history of Poland through the prism of its Christian belief. He told the Poles that they could take and reshape their nation; that they could revivify themselves through their fundamental belief in Christ—and Christ as redeemer not just for the future but for the present of their people. He helped to initiate the movement of Solidarnosc in Poland, and that movement was a combination of not just intellectuals such as Bishop Wojtyla but people in the union movements that had been banned and crushed and wiped out by the Soviet hegemony—in much the same way as the Prime Minister is attempting to do after 1 July in this country.

Pope John Paul II believed, as do the documents of the Roman Catholic Church, in the centrality of people combining as unionists to seek to advance the cause of ordinary working
people. Pope John Paul II understood that. That is why he spoke to the Polish people about them being strong enough to stand up to people who would exterminate their rights.

It is okay for the coalition to laud this Pope because he was a hard ‘c’ conservative and he helped to bring down communism. But they do not understand that at the same time, because he adopted a Christian approach, he was equally scathing when it came to the problems, the difficulties and the rigidities of full-blown capitalism. He believed in ordinary people with ordinary lives, but with the fundamental spark of faith. He believed that they should be championed, they should be allowed to worship their God and they should also be able to pursue a proper full life; and to do that they should be enabled, through their union activity, to represent themselves and improve their lives—and indeed to bring down Soviet communism. Their union activities combined their social beliefs and their religious beliefs as agents of change. Everyone, Mikhail Gorbachev included, recognises the fact that the initiator of this process was Bishop Wojtyla; that Pope John Paul II was the key element in driving to make this change.

I make that comment in regard to this history of Solidarnosc because it is extremely potent. It is a question that will need to be answered in coming years in terms of what social action there is for those people who believe in the tenets that this pope believed in—that ordinary people should be able to protect themselves and should be able to combine to do so against whatever ideology or whatever regime would seek to trample their fundamental rights, which should be protected by the Catholic Church and civil societies properly recognising the fundamental rights of people. Pope John Paul II was the most significant pope of the beginning of the 21st century and the late 20th century. He was a pope on the fulcrum of history, with Pope John XXIII. With his narrowing and conservative approach to a number of social issues, Pope John Paul II contracted and staunched many of the rivers of change that were unleashed in 1968 and 1969. He reflected his background, coming from Eastern Europe, from Poland, and the concerns that he thought were most central. So in the areas where he has been lionised there is a good, proper and correct reason to do that because he was a fundamental mover towards freedom and democratisation in Eastern Europe, led from Poland. He had a magnificent life and was a great example to everyone in the Catholic Church. (Time expired)

Mr KEENAN (Stirling) (12.27 pm)—I listened with interest to what the member for Blaxland said and I was enjoying a lot of his remarks up until towards the end. But to make a comparison between some of the changes that have just been introduced into parliament and the struggle of the solidarity movement in Poland against what was an evil and vicious regime I think very much cheapens the remarks he made in the debate on the condolence motion for one of the great figures of our time. I think that is a sad thing. I was enjoying his speech up until then.

Mr Hatton—You’ll hear a lot more of it as we go through the industrial relations debate.

Mr KEENAN—We will hear a lot more over-the-top hyperbole apparently as we go through this debate. It is with great sadness that I rise to speak on this condolence motion for His Holiness Pope John Paul II, who died at the beginning of April, because he was a towering figure of our century. He was a well-loved pope both within the Catholic community and amongst non-Catholics as well. He travelled more widely than any previous pope, survived an assassination attempt and used his papacy to spread messages of hope for people who had been savagely suppressed by their own governments.
Watching the eulogies that greeted the death of His Holiness, I was struck by the extraordinary life he led, from very humble beginnings in Poland. Karol Wojtyla was born in an industrial town bordering the city of Cracow in 1920. His father had been a non-commissioned officer, firstly in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, before the break-up of that empire, and subsequently within the Polish army. His mother died when he was a child and his older brother also died early from scarlet fever, which he contracted from one of his patients whilst studying medicine. The future pope studied philosophy at university where he took a keen interest in acting and poetry. Because of his student status he was exempted from military service when Nazi Germany invaded Poland in the act of infamy that started the Second World War.

History records that the Nazi occupation of Poland was violent and brutal. They closed Cracow University but the young Wojtyla continued his studies underground, ultimately choosing to become a priest at the beginning of 1942. He was subsequently ordained after the war ended in 1946 and was sent to the Angelicum University in Rome, where he received a doctorate, having written on St John of the Cross. He earned another doctorate when he returned to his native Poland in 1948 and he defended that thesis in 1953. I seek leave to continue my remarks later.

Leave granted; debate adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr NEVILLE (Hinkler) (12.30 pm)—I move:
That the Main Committee do now adjourn.

National Flagpoles Program

Ms HALL (Shortland) (12.30 pm)—This week in the parliament an issue that has been of great contention has been the decision by the Minister for Education, Science and Training in relation to school flags and flagpoles. I raised this issue back on 10 August 2004 after one of the public schools in my electorate approached me about the difficulty they were having in getting the minister to send them the guidelines and respond to their queries about accessing the funds. At that time I stated that Floraville school taught their students to love Australia and had decided to erect a flagpole to proudly fly the Australian flag. All the way along they were fobbed off. It took something like nine emails to the minister's office and correspondence from me to get approval for the flagpole. Since then other schools in the electorate have also sought to have flagpoles erected simply because they are proud Australians and want to fly the Australian flag in their school.

The school was very concerned about the conditions placed on the granting of the money, but it was prepared to go along with them. It was required to publicise the matter in its school newsletter and it had to say it was 'funded' and 'gifted' by the Australian government. As an adjunct, at the bottom of the criteria the school was requested to provide a tax invoice and a copy of the receipt. It is interesting that that was the least important of all the things stated in the criteria.

At the time of presentation it was insisted that Senator Tierney be present at the ceremony. The Liberal Party candidate was acknowledged at the ceremony, which was held only a couple of weeks before the election. I found that to be blatant politicisation of a program that is there for all Australians. I note that in today's Daily Telegraph it is pointed out that it might be the flagpole scheme of the government, but it is not the minister’s money that is paying for
the flag; it is the taxes of the people of Australia that have paid for the flag. The minister should never forget that.

This attitude is in stark contrast to that of the Minister for Veterans’ Affairs, who has recently circulated information to all members. We are a bit upset that we do not have the guidelines, but she has circulated information advising that there will be $10,000 available for activities and projects within each electorate in Australia directly relating to and commemorating the end of World War II and honouring veterans. I am quite certain that the minister intends for the local member to be involved in the distribution of the $10,000, which is significantly more than it costs to erect a flagpole. I believe that is the way things should be done. We have, on the one hand, a minister who politicises absolutely everything and, on the other, a minister who recognises that within the electorate the local member is the person who is foremost. I am extremely worried about what the minister for education will do about the capital grants that will be given to schools, hopefully in my electorate.

The other area where there has been a politicisation is in relation to the Green Corps. When I was talking to a Green Corps group, they said they would like me to go along to present some certificates and launch a program. Then they said, ‘What party are you in?’ I said, ‘The Labor Party,’ and they said, ‘No, you can’t do that; only government members are entitled to launch programs such as this or present certificates.’ It is blatant politicisation of the electoral system.

Mr Slipper interjecting—

Ms HALL—The member opposite wants to read the standing orders to see how this committee operates. I ask that the Howard government reconsider its decision—(Time expired)

Fisher Electorate: Fifth Annual Seniors Forum

Mr SLIPPER (Fisher) (12.35 pm)—The question I was going to ask the member opposite is: was she aware that when the Labor Party was in office for 13 years no opposition member was allowed to open any building and no opposition member was allowed to handle the official part of any government opening? So she ought not to cry crocodile tears. When the Labor Party is able to muster the numbers to sit on the treasury bench, their members will be given the privilege of conducting openings on behalf of the government.

Having said that, I did not intend to speak on that particular matter during this adjournment debate. I want to talk about the fifth annual Fisher Seniors Forum that was held last Friday at Caloundra. A number of years ago, I established the Fisher Seniors Council, which is a peak group of seniors organisations within the electorate of Fisher, to advise me, as the member for Fisher, on issues of importance and relevance to seniors in my electorate. Mrs Maureen Kingston, the former National President of the Association of Independent Retirees, was the inaugural deputy chairman—(Time expired)
a panel of experts. Issues that were canvassed included health, legal items such as power of attorney and funeral preparations, welfare issues, bank loans and mortgages, to name but a few.

The discussion format was complete with presenter Lyall Booth, who injected hypothetical situations into the conversations as they went along. An open discussion like this, with the regular injection of key points, can generate lots of interest and the hypothetical format ensures that discussions flow freely without the confines of a rigid format, and that is exactly what happened at the forum.

Panel members this year included Dr Chris Davis of the Australian Medical Association Queensland; Malcolm Izzard, financial adviser; Ros McCafferty from Centrelink; Brian Herd, legal advisor; Tim Goessling, funeral adviser; and Lianne Dickson from St George Bank, which was the major sponsor. All of those who attended the forum enjoyed themselves and many have remarked how successful it was. Juanita Hartkopf said:

It was excellent. A lot of us don’t think of these things before it is too late. I like that they did it with humour—it helps it sink in.

Nevell McPhee—who, incidentally, is the father of the Auditor-General, Ian McPhee—added that there was ‘a good collection of information available at the seniors expo’, which was held in conjunction with the forum. An informative video of the forum is available from Reflected Image Productions to enable those who would like to have been present to see what actually occurred. The Fisher Seniors Forum will be held again next year and we promise that it will be an entertaining and informative event especially designed to probe and dissect those issues that are of importance to seniors.

The Sunshine Coast is one of the oldest areas in Australia. Many people choose to retire on the Sunshine Coast because of our wonderful lifestyle, the tremendous climate and the beautiful scenery. Because it is an area with an ageing population, we have particular needs and a very highly motivated seniors community. The Fisher Seniors Council has enabled me to stay abreast of issues of particular interest to seniors in my electorate, and I am surprised that the seniors council concept has not been adopted in many other electorates. This year’s Fisher Seniors Forum was an outstanding success. It is the fifth annual forum that we have run, and we intend to continue to run them because they provide a very good service to local seniors. Margaret Donaldson and the members of the Fisher Seniors Council carried out a wonderful role in ensuring the outstanding success of the 2005 Fisher Seniors Forum.

**National Youth Week**

Ms MACKLIN (Jagajaga) (12.40 pm)—In my electorate of Jagajaga we are exceptionally lucky to have some terrific local schools that offer excellent opportunities for their students. For National Youth Week I invited my local secondary schools to participate in a roundtable to give young people the opportunity to speak out about the issues they care about.

Fifteen students came along and they spoke about the environment, both locally and globally, the cost of higher education, the lack of care in our community and, most significantly, bullying at school. The students were Hannah Torney and Sarah Richmond from La Trobe Secondary College; Jack Pead and Anna Imbesi, Ivanhoe Grammar School; Claire Johnson and Lachlan McLean, Eltham College; Milly Morison and Arwen Pagon, Eltham High School; Aimee Chadzynski and Ross Tuddin, Macleod College; Romaine Abraham and Eliza
It was distressing to find that it was bullying that received the most attention at our forum. All of the 15 students either had been victims of bullying themselves or knew of other students who had experienced it. They all had a story to tell, and they were equally concerned that bullying occurs in other places such as the workplace, sporting clubs and social clubs. They believe very strongly that more needs to be done to both reduce the incidence of bullying and deal with the after-effects. There was no question at all in the afternoon I spent with these students that bullying had affected each and every one of them.

These young people saw bullying as a symptom of a wider malaise in our broader community—that not enough people in our community care about each other. One suggestion, which many students were already involved with, was that we could develop a more caring and understanding society through greater use of mentoring. Many of the schools represented by these young people already have mentoring programs in place—for example, where older students work as supportive mentors for younger students. But it was also thought that this program could be extended into the wider community, encouraging students to interact with older people and to learn more about our local workplaces and lifestyles.

In the students’ discussion on the environment they were all very supportive of the ratification of the Kyoto protocol. They had a number of suggestions more locally, but the one they felt most strongly that they could control was the reduction in the use of plastic bags.

Each and every one of them had aspirations to go on to higher education, with most wanting to go university, and each and every one of them was very concerned about the very high cost of entering university. They had considerable levels of anxiety about how they were going to pay their HECS debts and about the inequality that the very high fees are creating. A common statement was: ‘Starting your life with a debt; who wants to do that?’ Students thought that HECS debts would be a deterrent to many students from families on low incomes who might be reluctant to take on such a large debt. They certainly felt that the high cost of HECS was not fair. They also considered the idea of full fee paying students entering courses with lower marks than those required for HECS students as extremely unfair. What gave me some cause for alarm was one student’s claim that she thought her family would not be able to afford for her to go to university at all, even though she wanted to go on to further study.

The students were certainly worried about a range of different issues: the use of drugs, particularly amongst fellow students at their schools; youth suicide—many of them wanted more information about how they could help their friends when they were facing very depressing times; the need for better sex education in our schools, raised by one student in particular; asylum seekers; and, not surprisingly, concerns for Schapelle Corby. These young people certainly cared about many issues, but what was most impressive was the way in which they cared about how other people in our community are treated. They were a very impressive group of kind and compassionate young people, and I am very proud to have them in my electorate.

South Australia: Public Transport

Mr FAWCETT (Wakefield) (12.45 pm)—There has been a lot of talk recently about states rights since people have raised concerns about what the Commonwealth is doing. I would like
to talk briefly about state responsibilities, because with rights comes responsibility. Recently I
sent out one of a number of surveys into the community, and surprisingly only around 30 per
cent of issues that people talk about are Australian government issues. Many of them are state
or local government issues. One of the most common concerns is public transport in outer
metropolitan and country areas. Why is this concern there and, more importantly, who is af-
fected?

Much of the focus of management in state government is centred on the metropolitan areas.
They look at key performance indicators such as on-time running of the services, but what
about the ability of people to get to the services, to the bus stops, and whether the frequency
and timing of the services correlate to the travelling needs of the residents for work or medical
appointments. Or what about, in country areas in particular, where there is no service and
there is no taxi service as an alternative. People from Riverton, Watervale and Saddleworth
have told me of their frustration. They have continually made approaches through their local
council and directly to the state government bodies, and yet they still have limited access to
Clare, which is where the majority of the regional medical services are located.

Can you imagine being ill, as an elderly person, and having to get up early in the morning
and go to Clare on the one bus service that runs and spend all day there—before and after
your medical appointment—waiting for the one service to return you home? There is no ade-
quate place to rest, particularly if you are ill. That is what residents in many of the country
areas are putting up with. People of Kapunda have told me about the fact that the one
service that runs from Kapunda does not actually correlate to their requirements to get to
work or to study or to specialist appointments in town.

People from Narooma, from an aged care facility, have talked about the fact that, despite
repeated requests, they cannot even change an existing bus route to come within walking dis-
tance of people who need the assistance of frames et cetera. And people in Andrews Farm
have talked about the frustration of new residential areas opening and the reluctance of the
government to approve the extension of bus routes into those new areas. Both the elderly and
young mums with kids have to walk long distances to access the start of the bus route and,
when they get there, often there are no bus shelters and there is no seating for the elderly.

Is anything happening? We make approaches to them, we try and change the attitude of the
city focused management who say to the elderly in places like Balaclava: ‘If you need to ac-
cess a service, just catch a taxi.’ There is no taxi service in Balaclava. The Commonwealth is
helping out. We recently funded the Playford council for a bus so that young families can ac-
tually access some of the early childhood programs in those areas. But if the states want to
have their rights, they also need to accept their responsibilities. Can they afford it? This year
South Australia, through the GST funding, has got $3.4 billion. That is an extra $187 million
over and above what they expected to get. They also now have a six-year phasing-out period
for the extra revenue they are getting at the moment through stamp duties. They can afford it,
they should afford it. I call on the South Australian government to step up and meet their re-
sponsibilities to give the people of Wakefield the public transport services they require and
they deserve.

Identity Fraud

Ms PLIBERSEK (Sydney) (12.49 pm)—I rise today to speak on the very serious matter of
identity fraud. I want to tell the story of one of my constituents who has been a victim of iden-
tity fraud and to put on the record the financial costs to her and the difficulties she has experienced as a result of the fraud. Without naming this constituent, she is a doctor who lives in Balmain. She was mailed her tax return cheque from the Australian Taxation Office. The cheque was for over $41,000. The cheque from the Taxation Office was sent to her accountant and then the accountant mailed it on to her home. Somehow, the cheque was intercepted during that mailing period. A fraudulent account was opened just two days later with a building society in a similar but not exactly the same name. The name was similar but spelt differently and, whereas my constituent is a doctor, the title that was used in the fraudulent identification was ‘Mr’.

The cheque was deposited and cleared, and the entire amount of over $41,000 was withdrawn in cash amounts over the following 10 days, often in very large amounts. The constituent was repeatedly denied any recompense by the building society, which said that they had no responsibility for the fact that a fake identity had been established and that they had not properly checked the documentation used for the 100-point verification system. I wrote to the building society, the Banking and Financial Services Ombudsman and the Australian Taxation Office. Of course, this is a situation where a constituent is $41,000 out of pocket and nobody is responsible. Eventually, the building society did agree to pay half of the money that this woman had lost but, of course, are still denying any responsibility.

What is fascinating about this story is just how little power this woman had to complain. First of all, the banking ombudsman told her that, by law, they could not represent the third party; they could only represent the customer of the building society, who of course is the person that established the fraudulent bank account. It is not as though they needed any representation. They were doing just fine—thank you very much.

It is interesting that the Financial Transaction Reports Act 1988 and the regulations of 1990 do not require a bank to retain or copy the documents produced in the 100-point verification. The building society says, ‘Oh, they were very good forgeries.’ We do not know whether they were very good forgeries or not because all we have is a number on a drivers licence. We have no ability to see the documents themselves. The bank is supposed to record the nature of the document, the name of the person, details of age or place of residence, date and place of issue and so on. This did not occur in this instance with the building society.

Only a fake passport and drivers licence numbers were recorded on the withdrawal slip, so there is no way to trace the documents and to have a closer look at them. The name that was used can be either a male or a female name, but the spelling would have indicated to most people that the cheque belonged to a female. Although the title of my constituent is ‘Dr’, the spelling of the name is generally used by a female, but that did not trigger any suspicion on the part of the building society. Nor did the fact that the withdrawals of cash were taken out over a short time and in very large amounts.

I believe there is a serious gap in the law whereby the banking ombudsman cannot represent the person whose money has been stolen but can represent the person who set up the false account. The only option for the victim of the identity fraud is to take legal action. We know how much it would cost to take the building society to court. We really do need to re-visit the scope of the ombudsman’s terms of reference to protect banking consumers in a broader sense. The Australian Taxation Office said it had no responsibility, but it might need to look a little more closely at the notion that it is perfectly safe to send out a $41,000 cheque
in the mail. I would certainly think twice about putting $41,000 into the post. We also need to look at the thousands of passports that are going missing every year, as was reported on The 7.30 Report on 3 May, and perhaps stop sending passports out in the mail too. (Time expired)

Parkes Electorate

Mr JOHN COBB (Parkes—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Transport and Regional Services) (12.54 pm)—I rise today to speak on individual and group achievements in the Parkes electorate. In particular I want to mention Greg Harris, who is a contestant in the international WorldSkills competition in Helsinki this week. Greg is a 24-year-old Dubbo electrician and employee of Country Energy. In the competition he will represent Australia in mechatronics. Put simply, mechatronics is mechanical, electrical and electronic systems combined with information technology. Using mechanical and electronic processing as well as computers, mechatronics is the science of developing new solutions to industrial problems.

Greg Harris is an example of what can be achieved by young people when they take the opportunity to learn a trade skill. He decided early on that university was not his chosen path in life. After enrolling in Dubbo TAFE, as a first-year apprentice he was encouraged to enter the WorldSkills Australia competition in Brisbane earlier this year. That attempt earned him and his team-mate a gold medal. Greg will be competing against 800 young skill and trade champions from 40 countries in the international competition in Helsinki. There are 21 skill and trade categories, ranging from welding, cookery and hairdressing to landscape construction. Dubbo should be very proud that one of its own can make it on the international stage. The WorldSkills competition runs from 26 to 29 May. Information and results will be posted on its web site—www.worldskills.org.au—daily. I wish Greg and the other 24 Australians all the very best in their endeavours as they represent us.

I was privileged recently to present a Rainfall Excellence Award to Mrs Alma Cooney, of Hermidale, west of Nyngan. For the last 50 years, Alma Cooney has kept the rainfall records at Hermidale Tank, a designated site about two kilometres south of Hermidale, for the Bureau of Meteorology. For 100 years the Cooney family—Alma’s grandmother, then Alma’s mother and then Alma—have manned the weather station at Hermidale. And in 100 years there has not been one blemish, not one omission or correction, in the monthly rainfall figures that have been sent to the bureau—and even they are somewhat amazed at that record. For 100 years those three women have meticulously put in rainfall records that will never be bettered in the region. I was very proud to present the award to Alma Cooney on behalf of us all. It is a remarkable achievement not just to the family but also for the Bureau of Meteorology.

I also want to mention the school community water program in Broken Hill. The Alma Public School is one of 27 sites that will take part in water-saving measures as part of the federal government’s commitment to practical water conservation. This is one of the measures we announced as part of World Water Day celebrations on 22 March. An amount of $39,000 was provided through the community water grant to collect water run-off from the school’s evaporative airconditioning system. This water, along with rainwater, will be collected in six tanks and used to irrigate the school’s gardens via a surface watering system. The project could save more than two million litres of water a year. I think it is an incredible example of one of our schools entering into a partnership of the Commonwealth. It is an example for towns, agriculture and industry of the things that we can actually do to save water, especially in the circumstances that regional Australia and some of our towns are facing right now.
This morning the member for Wills, Mr Thomson, made some incredible remarks, saying that I had insulted the people of Broken Hill. That is absolutely untrue. I have mentioned and I will again in Broken Hill and elsewhere that some of the local leadership of Broken Hill is negative and inclined to blame everyone around them and that that does not help the town get on with its life. The Commonwealth provides Regional Partnerships, Sustainable Regions and other measures to help people help themselves. People like the member for Murray-Darling are just being negative all the time and make it very hard for the town to get ahead. (Time expired)

Main Committee adjourned at 1 pm
QUESTIONS IN WRITING

Printing Entitlements
(Question No. 416)

Mr Martin Ferguson asked the Minister representing the Special Minister of State, in writing, on 8 February 2005:

Further to the answer to question No. 71 (Hansard, 9 February 2005, page 80), concerning the right of members to use their printing entitlement to print how-to-vote cards, did members of the House of Representatives have a right to use their printing entitlements to print how-to-vote cards for the House of Representatives elections held in (a) 1996, (b) 1998, and (c) 2001.

Mr Abbott—The Special Minister of State has supplied the following answer to the honourable member’s question:

The question seeks an opinion on the interpretation of the wording contained in the Parliamentary Entitlements Act Regulations. As such, it is a question seeking an opinion on a question of law (“the interpretation of a statute”) and, thus, is not permitted as per House of Representatives Practice (4th Ed.) pages 530-531.

Child Abuse
(Question No. 592)

Ms King asked the Minister representing the Minister for Defence, in writing, on 16 February 2005:

(1) When were the allegations of child abuse against a cadet at a Cadets Promotion 1/04 Course Training Camp at Puckapunyal first brought to the attention of the Minister and the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Defence.

(2) Can the Minister confirm that the investigation into the allegation against the cadet concluded that (a) a written apology should be made, (b) there should be a review of practices and policy, (c) formal warnings should be issued, and (d) there should be a review of the training material for Officers of Cadets; if so, can the Minister also confirm that the Parliamentary Secretary informed the Cadet of these recommendations in a letter dated 21 October 2004.

(3) On what date was the Parliamentary Secretary first made aware of the report’s recommendations.

(4) Can the Minister explain why the cadet and his family have not received an apology four months after being promised an apology by the Parliamentary Secretary.

(5) Will the Minister ensure that the cadet receives an apology; if so, will the Minister also ensure that the misconduct is properly addressed as recommended in the report by the Headquarters, Australian Army Cadets, Victoria.

(6) Has the review of practice and policy referred to in the letter dated 21 October 2004 from the Parliamentary Secretary to the cadet’s father been completed; if so, what were the findings; if not, when will it be completed.

(7) Have the formal warnings referred to in the letter dated 21 October 2004 from the Parliamentary Secretary to the cadet been issued; if not, why not.

(8) Has the review of the training material for Officers of Cadets referred to in the letter dated 21 October 2004 from the Parliamentary Secretary to the cadet been completed; if not, why not.

Mrs De-Anne Kelly—The Minister for Defence has provided the following answer to the honourable member’s question:
(1) There were no allegations of child abuse against a cadet at a Cadets Promotion 1/04 Course Training Camp at Puckapunyal. The issues brought to the attention of the Minister and the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Defence were that of the alleged mistreatment of a cadet on the evening of 9 July 2004. These issues were raised in a letter to the Minister for Defence from Ms Catherine King MP dated 16 July 2004.

(2) The Minister can confirm that the investigation into the allegation against the cadet has finished and recommended that:

(a) three people involved should offer a written apology to the cadet;
(b) there should be changes made to the policy, practices and training relating to the conduct of interviews and counselling of minors in the Australian Army Cadets;
(c) a formal warning should be issued to one adult member involved in this matter and formal counselling should be undertaken with three other persons involved; and
(d) there should be an audit of the training material for Officers of Cadets to ensure that it is appropriate.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Defence informed the cadet of these recommendations in a letter dated 21 October 2004.

(3) Letters of apology written to the cadet were dated 27 September 2004. Headquarters Australian Army Cadets are currently determining why the cadet’s father did not see these letters. Copies of the letters of apology to the cadet were then sent to his father on 17 February 2005, and verification of their receipt has been confirmed. The Commander Australian Army Cadets, Brigadier Neil Miller, has spoken with the cadet’s father and offered his apology for any grief caused to his son or his family.

(4) The Minister can confirm that the cadet has received letters of apology from three people involved in the matter, and an apology from the Commander Australian Army Cadets, Brigadier Neil Miller. The Minister can also confirm that the misconduct has been properly addressed as recommended in the report by Headquarters, Australian Army Cadets.

(6) Yes. The actions taken include a re-write of the Australian Army Cadets Policy Manual, and the implementation of a new Acceptable Behaviour Policy and training package for adult and youth members of the Australian Defence Force Cadets.

(8) The review of the training material for Officers of Cadets referred to in the letter dated 21 October 2004 from the Parliamentary Secretary to the cadet is being actioned. An extensive review of the Training Management Package (which details the training to be completed by Officers of Cadets) will be finalised over the coming months. As referred to in (6) above, a new Acceptable Behaviour Policy and training package for adult and youth members of the Australian Defence Force Cadets has been implemented.

Overseas Travel
(Question No. 843)

Mr Rudd asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs, in writing, on 16 March 2005:

(1) In respect of his travel to the UK, Switzerland, Spain, Denmark and Sweden in January-February 2001, (a) what was the total cost of travel and accommodation for him and his party, (b) what sum was spent on airline travel (i) in total and (ii) for his personal staff, (c) how many personal staff ac-
companied him, (d) what class of air travel was used by (i) his personal staff and (ii) departmental staff, (e) what sum was spent on ground transport, (f) what modes of ground transport were used, (g) how many hotel rooms were booked for him and his staff, and (h) what standard of hotel room was booked for (i) him and (ii) staff.

(2) In respect of each official function he hosted on this trip, (a) when and where was it held, (b) how many official guests attended, (c) what sum was spent on (i) food and (ii) beverages, and (d) what entertainment was provided and what did it cost.

Mr Downer—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

Information on the costs of the overseas travel listed is contained in the attached table. The table was prepared by my department with the assistance of the Department of Finance and Administration and the Department of Defence. Further breakdown of the detail of these costs would entail a significant diversion of resources and in the circumstances I do not consider the additional work can be justified.

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>1. Visit</th>
<th>(a) what was the total cost of travel and accommodation for him and his personal staff</th>
<th>(c) how many personal staff accompanied him</th>
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<td>24 Jan- 4 Feb</td>
<td>Switzerland, Spain, Denmark and Sweden</td>
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Overseas Travel
(Question No. 844)

Mr Rudd asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs, in writing, on 16 March 2005:

(1) In respect of his travel to the UK, the USA, Brazil, Argentina and Chile in March-April 2001, (a) what was the total cost of travel and accommodation for him and his party, (b) what sum was spent on airline travel (i) in total and (ii) for his personal staff, (c) how many personal staff accompanied him, (d) what class of air travel was used by (i) his personal staff and (ii) departmental staff, (e) what sum was spent on ground transport, (f) what modes of ground transport were used, (g) how many hotel rooms were booked for him and his staff, and (h) what standard of hotel room was booked for (i) him and (ii) staff.

(2) In respect of each official function he hosted on this trip, (a) when and where was it held, (b) how many official guests attended, (c) what sum was spent on (i) food and (ii) beverages, and (d) what entertainment was provided and what did it cost.

Mr Downer—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

Information on the costs of the overseas travel listed is contained in the attached table. The table was prepared by my department with the assistance of the Department of Finance and Administration and the Department of Defence. Further breakdown of the detail of these costs would entail a significant diversion of resources and in the circumstances I do not consider the additional work can be justified.
Mr Rudd asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs, in writing, on 16 March 2005:

1. In respect of his travel to Papua New Guinea in April 2001, (a) what was the total cost of travel and accommodation for him and his party, (b) what sum was spent on airline travel (i) in total and (ii) for his personal staff, (c) how many personal staff accompanied him, (d) what class of air travel was used by (i) his personal staff and (ii) departmental staff, (e) what sum was spent on ground transport, (f) what modes of ground transport were used, (g) how many hotel rooms were booked for him and his staff, and (h) what standard of hotel room was booked for (i) him and (ii) staff.

2. In respect of each official function he hosted on this trip, (a) when and where was it held, (b) how many official guests attended, (c) what sum was spent on (i) food and (ii) beverages, and (d) what entertainment was provided and what did it cost.

Mr Downer—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

Information on the costs of the overseas travel listed is contained in the attached table. The table was prepared by my department with the assistance of the Department of Finance and Administration and the Department of Defence. Further breakdown of the detail of these costs would entail a significant diversion of resources and in the circumstances I do not consider the additional work can be justified.

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<th>Date</th>
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**Overseas Travel**  
(Question No. 846)

Mr Rudd asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs, in writing, on 16 March 2005:

1. In respect of his travel to Turkey, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Kenya, South Africa and the UK in April-May 2001, (a) what was the total cost of travel and accommodation for him and his party, (b) what sum was spent on airline travel (i) in total and (ii) for his personal staff, (c) how many personal staff accompanied him, (d) what class of air travel was used by (i) his personal staff and (ii) departmental staff, (e) what sum was spent on ground transport, (f) what modes of ground transport were used, (g) how many hotel rooms were booked for him and his staff, and (h) what standard of hotel room was booked for (i) him and (ii) staff.

2. In respect of each official function he hosted on this trip, (a) when and where was it held, (b) how many official guests attended, (c) what sum was spent on (i) food and (ii) beverages, and (d) what entertainment was provided and what did it cost.

Mr Downer—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

Information on the costs of the overseas travel listed is contained in the attached table. The table was prepared by my department with the assistance of the Department of Finance and Administration and the Department of Defence. Further breakdown of the detail of these costs would entail a significant diversion of resources and in the circumstances I do not consider the additional work can be justified.

<table>
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<th>Date</th>
<th>Visit</th>
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<th>(c) how many personal staff accompanied him</th>
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<td>Papua New Guinea</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td></td>
<td>Travel tabled by DOFA for Mr Downer. Senator Kay Patterson travelled in his place.</td>
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sonal staff and (ii) departmental staff, (e) what sum was spent on ground transport, (f) what modes of ground transport were used, (g) how many hotel rooms were booked for him and his staff, and (h) what standard of hotel room was booked for (i) him and (ii) staff.

(2) In respect of each official function he hosted on this trip, (a) when and where was it held, (b) how many official guests attended, (c) what sum was spent on (i) food and (ii) beverages, and (d) what entertainment was provided and what did it cost.

Mr Downer—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

Information on the costs of the overseas travel listed is contained in the attached table. The table was prepared by my department with the assistance of the Department of Finance and Administration and the Department of Defence. Further breakdown of the detail of these costs would entail a significant diversion of resources and in the circumstances I do not consider the additional work can be justified.

2001

<table>
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<th>Date</th>
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**Overseas Travel (Question No. 847)**

Mr Rudd asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs, in writing, on 16 March 2005:

(1) In respect of his travel to Japan, the Republic of Korea and Hong Kong in May-June 2001, (a) what was the total cost of travel and accommodation for him and his party, (b) what sum was spent on airline travel (i) in total and (ii) for his personal staff, (c) how many personal staff accompanied him, (d) what class of air travel was used by (i) his personal staff and (ii) departmental staff, (e) what sum was spent on ground transport, (f) what modes of ground transport were used, (g) how many hotel rooms were booked for him and his staff, and (h) what standard of hotel room was booked for (i) him and (ii) staff.

(2) In respect of each official function he hosted on this trip, (a) when and where was it held, (b) how many official guests attended, (c) what sum was spent on (i) food and (ii) beverages, and (d) what entertainment was provided and what did it cost.

Mr Downer—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

Information on the costs of the overseas travel listed is contained in the attached table. The table was prepared by my department with the assistance of the Department of Finance and Administration and the Department of Defence. Further breakdown of the detail of these costs would entail a significant diversion of resources and in the circumstances I do not consider the additional work can be justified.
Mr Rudd asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs, in writing, on 16 March 2005:

(1) In respect of his travel to East Timor in July 2001, (a) what was the total cost of travel and accommodation for him and his party, (b) what sum was spent on airline travel (i) in total and (ii) for his personal staff, (c) how many personal staff accompanied him, (d) what class of air travel was used by (i) his personal staff and (ii) departmental staff, (e) what sum was spent on ground transport, (f) what modes of ground transport were used, (g) how many hotel rooms were booked for him and his staff, and (h) what standard of hotel room was booked for (i) him and (ii) staff.

(2) In respect of each official function he hosted on this trip, (a) when and where was it held, (b) how many official guests attended, (c) what sum was spent on (i) food and (ii) beverages, and (d) what entertainment was provided and what did it cost.

Mr Downer— The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

Information on the costs of the overseas travel listed is contained in the attached table. The table was prepared by my department with the assistance of the Department of Finance and Administration and the Department of Defence. Further breakdown of the detail of these costs would entail a significant diversion of resources and in the circumstances I do not consider the additional work can be justified.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Visit</th>
<th>(a) what was the total cost of travel and accommodation for him and his personal staff</th>
<th>(c) how many personal staff accompanied him</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4-5 Jul</td>
<td>East Timor</td>
<td>$36,466.44</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mr Rudd asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs, in writing, on 16 March 2005:

(1) In respect of his travel to Singapore and Vietnam in July 2001, (a) what was the total cost of travel and accommodation for him and his party, (b) what sum was spent on airline travel (i) in total and (ii) for his personal staff, (c) how many personal staff accompanied him, (d) what class of air travel was used by (i) his personal staff and (ii) departmental staff, (e) what sum was spent on ground transport, (f) what modes of ground transport were used, (g) how many hotel rooms were booked for him and his staff, and (h) what standard of hotel room was booked for (i) him and (ii) staff.
(2) In respect of each official function he hosted on this trip, (a) when and where it was held, (b) how
many official guests attended, (c) what sum was spent on (i) food and (ii) beverages, and (d) what
entertainment was provided and what did it cost.

Mr Downer—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

Information on the costs of the overseas travel listed is contained in the attached table. The table was
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Department of Defence. Further breakdown of the detail of these costs would entail a significant diver-
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Visit</th>
<th>(a) what was the total cost of travel and accommodation for him and his personal staff</th>
<th>(c) how many personal staff accompanied him</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>22-27 Jul</td>
<td>Singapore and Vietnam</td>
<td>$38,402.39</td>
<td>2</td>
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</table>

Overseas Travel
(Question No. 850)

Mr Rudd asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs, in writing, on 16 March 2005:

(1) In respect of his travel to the UK and Indonesia in September 2001, (a) what was the total cost of
travel and accommodation for him and his party, (b) what sum was spent on airline travel (i) in total
and (ii) for his personal staff, (c) how many personal staff accompanied him, (d) what class of air
travel was used by (i) his personal staff and (ii) departmental staff, (e) what sum was spent on
ground transport, (f) what modes of ground transport were used, (g) how many hotel rooms were
booked for him and his staff, and (h) what standard of hotel room was booked for (i) him and (ii)
staff.

(2) In respect of each official function he hosted on this trip, (a) when and where it was held, (b) how
many official guests attended, (c) what sum was spent on (i) food and (ii) beverages, and (d) what
entertainment was provided and what did it cost.

Mr Downer—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

Information on the costs of the overseas travel listed is contained in the attached table. The table was
prepared by my department with the assistance of the Department of Finance and Administration and the
Department of Defence. Further breakdown of the detail of these costs would entail a significant diver-
sion of resources and in the circumstances I do not consider the additional work can be justified.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Visit</th>
<th>(a) what was the total cost of travel and accommodation for him and his personal staff</th>
<th>(c) how many personal staff accompanied him</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2-8 Sept 2001</td>
<td>UK and Indonesia</td>
<td>$47,759.14</td>
<td>1</td>
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</table>

Overseas Travel
(Question No. 851)

Mr Rudd asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs, in writing, on 16 March 2005:

(1) In respect of his travel to the USA in September-October 2001, (a) what was the total cost of travel
and accommodation for him and his party, (b) what sum was spent on airline travel (i) in total and
(ii) for his personal staff, (c) how many personal staff accompanied him, (d) what class of air travel was used by (i) his personal staff and (ii) departmental staff, (e) what sum was spent on ground transport, (f) what modes of ground transport were used, (g) how many hotel rooms were booked for him and his staff, and (h) what standard of hotel room was booked for (i) him and (ii) staff. 

(2) In respect of each official function he hosted on this trip, (a) when and where was it held, (b) how many official guests attended, (c) what sum was spent on (i) food and (ii) beverages, and (d) what entertainment was provided and what did it cost.

Mr Downer—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

Information on the costs of the overseas travel listed is contained in the attached table. The table was prepared by my department with the assistance of the Department of Finance and Administration and the Department of Defence. Further breakdown of the detail of these costs would entail a significant diversion of resources and in the circumstances I do not consider the additional work can be justified.

2001

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Visit</th>
<th>(a) what was the total cost of travel and accommodation for him and his personal staff</th>
<th>(c) how many personal staff accompanied him</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>26-30 Sept</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>$37,006.27</td>
<td>1</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overseas Travel
(Question No. 852)

Mr Rudd asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs, in writing, on 16 March 2005:

(1) In respect of his travel to China in October 2001, (a) what was the total cost of travel and accommodation for him and his party, (b) what sum was spent on airline travel (i) in total and (ii) for his personal staff, (c) how many personal staff accompanied him, (d) what class of air travel was used by (i) his personal staff and (ii) departmental staff, (e) what sum was spent on ground transport, (f) what modes of ground transport were used, (g) how many hotel rooms were booked for him and his staff, and (h) what standard of hotel room was booked for (i) him and (ii) staff.

(2) In respect of each official function he hosted on this trip, (a) when and where was it held, (b) how many official guests attended, (c) what sum was spent on (i) food and (ii) beverages, and (d) what entertainment was provided and what did it cost.

Mr Downer—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

Information on the costs of the overseas travel listed is contained in the attached table. The table was prepared by my department with the assistance of the Department of Finance and Administration and the Department of Defence. Further breakdown of the detail of these costs would entail a significant diversion of resources and in the circumstances I do not consider the additional work can be justified.

2001

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Visit</th>
<th>(a) what was the total cost of travel and accommodation for him and his personal staff</th>
<th>(c) how many personal staff accompanied him</th>
<th>Comment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>17-18 Oct</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>$21,000.94</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overseas Travel
(Question No. 853)

Mr Rudd asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs, in writing, on 16 March 2005:
(1) In respect of his travel to Nauru, Fiji, Vanuatu and New Zealand in December 2001, (a) what was the total cost of travel and accommodation for him and his party, (b) what sum was spent on airline travel in total and (ii) for his personal staff, (c) how many personal staff accompanied him, (d) what class of air travel was used by (i) his personal staff and (ii) departmental staff, (e) what sum was spent on ground transport, (f) what modes of ground transport were used, (g) how many hotel rooms were booked for him and his staff, and (h) what standard of hotel room was booked for (i) him and (ii) staff.

(2) In respect of each official function he hosted on this trip, (a) when and where was it held, (b) how many official guests attended, (c) what sum was spent on (i) food and (ii) beverages, and (d) what entertainment was provided and what did it cost.

Mr Downer—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

Information on the costs of the overseas travel listed is contained in the attached table. The table was prepared by my department with the assistance of the Department of Finance and Administration and the Department of Defence. Further breakdown of the detail of these costs would entail a significant diversion of resources and in the circumstances I do not consider the additional work can be justified.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Visit</th>
<th>(a) what was the total cost of travel and accommodation for him and his personal staff</th>
<th>(c) how many personal staff accompanied him</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10-16 Dec</td>
<td>Nauru, Fiji, Vanuatu and New Zealand</td>
<td>$58,786.63</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**Overseas Travel**

(Question No. 854)

Mr Rudd asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs, in writing, on 16 March 2005:

(1) In respect of his travel to the UK in December 2001, (a) what was the total cost of travel and accommodation for him and his party, (b) what sum was spent on airline travel (i) in total and (ii) for his personal staff, (c) how many personal staff accompanied him, (d) what class of air travel was used by (i) his personal staff and (ii) departmental staff, (e) what sum was spent on ground travel, (f) what modes of ground transport were used, (g) how many hotel rooms were booked for him and his staff, and (h) what standard of hotel room was booked for (i) him and (ii) staff.

(2) In respect of each official function he hosted on this trip, (a) when and where was it held, (b) how many official guests attended, (c) what sum was spent on (i) food and (ii) beverages, and (d) what entertainment was provided and what did it cost.

Mr Downer—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

Information on the costs of the overseas travel listed is contained in the attached table. The table was prepared by my department with the assistance of the Department of Finance and Administration and the Department of Defence. Further breakdown of the detail of these costs would entail a significant diversion of resources and in the circumstances I do not consider the additional work can be justified.

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Visit</th>
<th>(a) what was the total cost of travel and accommodation for him and his personal staff</th>
<th>(c) how many personal staff accompanied him</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18-23 Dec</td>
<td>UK</td>
<td>$37,662.25</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Overseas Travel  
(Question No. 855)

Mr Rudd asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs, in writing, on 16 March 2005:

(1) In respect of his travel to the Solomon Islands in January 2002, (a) what was the total cost of travel and accommodation for him and his party, (b) what sum was spent on airline travel (i) in total and (ii) for his personal staff, (c) how many personal staff accompanied him, (d) what class of air travel was used by (i) his personal staff and (ii) departmental staff, (e) what sum was spent on ground transport, (f) what modes of ground transport were used, (g) how many hotel rooms were booked for him and his staff, and (h) what standard of hotel room was booked for (i) him and (ii) staff.

(2) In respect of each official function he hosted on this trip, (a) when and where was it held, (b) how many official guests attended, (c) what sum was spent on (i) food and (ii) beverages, and (d) what entertainment was provided and what did it cost.

Mr Downer—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

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<th>Date</th>
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<th>(a) what was the total cost of travel and accommodation for him and his personal staff</th>
<th>(c) how many personal staff accompanied him</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7-8 Jan</td>
<td>Solomon Islands</td>
<td>$32,637.93</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overseas Travel  
(Question No. 856)

Mr Rudd asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs, in writing, on 16 March 2005:

(1) In respect of his travel to the UK, Spain, Germany, Italy, Poland and Russia in January-February 2002, (a) what was the total cost of travel and accommodation for him and his party, (b) what sum was spent on airline travel (i) in total and (ii) for his personal staff, (c) how many personal staff accompanied him, (d) what class of air travel was used by (i) his personal staff and (ii) departmental staff, (e) what sum was spent on ground transport, (f) what modes of ground transport were used, (g) how many hotel rooms were booked for him and his staff, and (h) what standard of hotel room was booked for (i) him and (ii) staff.

(2) In respect of each official function he hosted on this trip, (a) when and where was it held, (b) how many official guests attended, (c) what sum was spent on (i) food and (ii) beverages, and (d) what entertainment was provided and what did it cost.

Mr Downer—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

Information on the costs of the overseas travel listed is contained in the attached table. The table was prepared by my department with the assistance of the Department of Finance and Administration and the Department of Defence. Further breakdown of the detail of these costs would entail a significant diversion of resources and in the circumstances I do not consider the additional work can be justified.
Mr Rudd asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs, in writing, on 16 March 2005:

(1) In respect of his travel to Indonesia in February-March 2002, (a) what was the total cost of travel and accommodation for him and his party, (b) what sum was spent on airline travel (i) in total and (ii) for his personal staff, (c) how many personal staff accompanied him, (d) what class of air travel was used by (i) his personal staff and (ii) departmental staff, (e) what sum was spent on ground transport, (f) what modes of ground transport were used, (g) how many hotel rooms were booked for him and his staff, and (h) what standard of hotel room was booked for (i) him and (ii) staff.

(2) In respect of each official function he hosted on this trip, (a) when and where was it held, (b) how many official guests attended, (c) what sum was spent on (i) food and (ii) beverages, and (d) what entertainment was provided and what did it cost.

Mr Downer—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

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<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>25-28 Feb 2002</td>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>$56,519.78</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mr Rudd asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs, in writing, on 16 March 2005:

(1) In respect of his travel to Belgium and India in April 2002, (a) what was the total cost of travel and accommodation for him and his party, (b) what sum was spent on airline travel (i) in total and (ii) for his personal staff, (c) how many personal staff accompanied him, (d) what class of air travel was used by (i) his personal staff and (ii) departmental staff, (e) what sum was spent on ground transport, (f) what modes of ground transport were used, (g) how many hotel rooms were booked for him and his staff, and (h) what standard of hotel room was booked for (i) him and (ii) staff.

(2) In respect of each official function he hosted on this trip, (a) when and where was it held, (b) how many official guests attended, (c) what sum was spent on (i) food and (ii) beverages, and (d) what entertainment was provided and what did it cost.
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18-24 Apr</td>
<td>Belgium and India</td>
<td>$54,834.23</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>19-24 May</td>
<td>East Timor, Thailand and Indonesia</td>
<td>$42,981.44</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Overseas Travel**

*(Question No. 859)*

Mr Rudd asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs, in writing, on 16 March 2005:

1. In respect of his travel to East Timor, Thailand and Indonesia in May 2002, (a) what was the total cost of travel and accommodation for him and his party, (b) what sum was spent on airline travel in total and (ii) for his personal staff, (c) how many personal staff accompanied him, (d) what class of air travel was used by (i) his personal staff and (ii) departmental staff, (e) what sum was spent on ground transport, (f) what modes of ground transport were used, (g) how many hotel rooms were booked for him and his staff, and (h) what standard of hotel room was booked for (i) him and (ii) staff.

2. In respect of each official function he hosted on this trip, (a) when and where was it held, (b) how many official guests attended, (c) what sum was spent on (i) food and (ii) beverages, and (d) what entertainment was provided and what did it cost.

Mr Downer—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

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<th>(c) how many personal staff accompanied him</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>19-24 May</td>
<td>East Timor, Thailand and Indonesia</td>
<td>$42,981.44</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Overseas Travel**

*(Question No. 860)*

Mr Rudd asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs, in writing, on 16 March 2005:

1. In respect of his travel to the USA in July 2002, (a) what was the total cost of travel and accommodation for him and his party, (b) what sum was spent on airline travel (i) in total and (ii) for his personal staff, (c) how many personal staff accompanied him, (d) what class of air travel was used by (i) his personal staff and (ii) departmental staff, (e) what sum was spent on ground transport, (f)
what modes of ground transport were used, (g) how many hotel rooms were booked for him and his staff, and (h) what standard of hotel room was booked for (i) him and (ii) staff.

(2) In respect of each official function he hosted on this trip, (a) when and where was it held, (b) how many official guests attended, (c) what sum was spent on (i) food and (ii) beverages, and (d) what entertainment was provided and what it cost.

Mr Downer—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

Information on the costs of the overseas travel listed is contained in the attached table. The table was prepared by my department with the assistance of the Department of Finance and Administration and the Department of Defence. Further breakdown of the detail of these costs would entail a significant diversion of resources and in the circumstances I do not consider the additional work can be justified.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>1. Visit</th>
<th>(a) what was the total cost of travel and accommodation for him and his personal staff</th>
<th>(c) how many personal staff accompanied him</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8-16 Jul</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>$80,990.71</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overseas Travel
(Question No. 861)

Mr Rudd asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs, in writing, on 16 March 2005:

(1) In respect of his travel to Brunei and Malaysia in July-August 2002, (a) what was the total cost of travel and accommodation for him and his party, (b) what sum was spent on airline travel (i) in total and (ii) for his personal staff, (c) how many personal staff accompanied him, (d) what class of air travel was used by (i) his personal staff and (ii) departmental staff, (e) what sum was spent on ground transport, (f) what modes of ground transport were used, (g) how many hotel rooms were booked for him and his staff, and (h) what standard of hotel room was booked for (i) him and (ii) staff.

(2) In respect of each official function he hosted on this trip, (a) when and where was it held, (b) how many official guests attended, (c) what sum was spent on (i) food and (ii) beverages, and (d) what entertainment was provided and what it cost.

Mr Downer—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

Information on the costs of the overseas travel listed is contained in the attached table. The table was prepared by my department with the assistance of the Department of Finance and Administration and the Department of Defence. Further breakdown of the detail of these costs would entail a significant diversion of resources and in the circumstances I do not consider the additional work can be justified.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>1. Visit</th>
<th>(a) what was the total cost of travel and accommodation for him and his personal staff</th>
<th>(c) how many personal staff accompanied him</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>30 Jul- 4 Aug</td>
<td>Brunei and Malaysia</td>
<td>$25,206.58</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overseas Travel
(Question No. 862)

Mr Rudd asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs, in writing, on 16 March 2005:
(1) In respect of his travel to the USA in September 2002, (a) what was the total cost of travel and accommodation for him and his party, (b) what sum was spent on airline travel (i) in total and (ii) for his personal staff, (c) how many personal staff accompanied him, (d) what class of air travel was used by (i) his personal staff and (ii) departmental staff, (e) what sum was spent on ground transport, (f) what modes of ground transport were used, (g) how many hotel rooms were booked for him and his staff, and (h) what standard of hotel room was booked for (i) him and (ii) staff.

(2) In respect of each official function he hosted on this trip, (a) when and where was it held, (b) how many official guests attended, (c) what sum was spent on (i) food and (ii) beverages, and (d) what entertainment was provided and what did it cost.

Mr Downer—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

Information on the costs of the overseas travel listed is contained in the attached table. The table was prepared by my department with the assistance of the Department of Finance and Administration and the Department of Defence. Further breakdown of the detail of these costs would entail a significant diversion of resources and in the circumstances I do not consider the additional work can be justified.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Visit</th>
<th>(a) what was the total cost of travel and accommodation for him and his personal staff</th>
<th>(c) how many personal staff accompanied him</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10-17 Sept</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overseas Travel
(Question No. 863)

Mr Rudd asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs, in writing, on 16 March 2005:

(1) In respect of his travel to Burma, Thailand, Indonesia and Malaysia in October 2002, (a) what was the total cost of travel and accommodation for him and his party, (b) what sum was spent on airline travel (i) in total and (ii) for his personal staff, (c) how many personal staff accompanied him, (d) what class of air travel was used by (i) his personal staff and (ii) departmental staff, (e) what sum was spent on ground transport, (f) what modes of ground transport were used, (g) how many hotel rooms were booked for him and his staff, and (h) what standard of hotel room was booked for (i) him and (ii) staff.

(2) In respect of each official function he hosted on this trip, (a) when and where was it held, (b) how many official guests attended, (c) what sum was spent on (i) food and (ii) beverages, and (d) what entertainment was provided and what did it cost.

Mr Downer—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

Information on the costs of the overseas travel listed is contained in the attached table. The table was prepared by my department with the assistance of the Department of Finance and Administration and the Department of Defence. Further breakdown of the detail of these costs would entail a significant diversion of resources and in the circumstances I do not consider the additional work can be justified.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Visit</th>
<th>(a) what was the total cost of travel and accommodation for him and his personal staff</th>
<th>(c) how many personal staff accompanied him</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-9 Oct</td>
<td>Burma, Thailand, Indonesia and Malaysia</td>
<td>$29,461.93</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Overseas Travel
(Question No. 864)

Mr Rudd asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs, in writing, on 16 March 2005:

(1) In respect of his travel to Indonesia in October 2002, (a) what was the total cost of travel and accommodation for him and his party, (b) what sum was spent on airline travel (i) in total and (ii) for his personal staff, (c) how many personal staff accompanied him, (d) what class of air travel was used by (i) his personal staff and (ii) departmental staff, (e) what sum was spent on ground transport, (f) what modes of ground transport were used, (g) how many hotel rooms were booked for him and his staff, and (h) what standard of hotel room was booked for (i) him and (ii) staff.

(2) In respect of each official function he hosted on this trip, (a) when and where was it held, (b) how many official guests attended, (c) what sum was spent on (i) food and (ii) beverages, and (d) what entertainment was provided and what did it cost.

Mr Downer—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:
Information on the costs of the overseas travel listed is contained in the attached table. The table was prepared by my department with the assistance of the Department of Finance and Administration and the Department of Defence. Further breakdown of the detail of these costs would entail a significant diversion of resources and in the circumstances I do not consider the additional work can be justified.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Visit</th>
<th>(a) what was the total cost of travel and accommodation for him and his personal staff</th>
<th>(c) how many personal staff accompanied him</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>14-16 Oct</td>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>$24,678.61</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overseas Travel
(Question No. 865)

Mr Rudd asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs, in writing, on 16 March 2005:

(1) In respect of his travel to the USA, Canada and the UK in October-November 2002, (a) what was the total cost of travel and accommodation for him and his party, (b) what sum was spent on airline travel (i) in total and (ii) for his personal staff, (c) how many personal staff accompanied him, (d) what class of air travel was used by (i) his personal staff and (ii) departmental staff, (e) what sum was spent on ground transport, (f) what modes of ground transport were used, (g) how many hotel rooms were booked for him and his staff, and (h) what standard of hotel room was booked for (i) him and (ii) staff.

(2) In respect of each official function he hosted on this trip, (a) when and where was it held, (b) how many official guests attended, (c) what sum was spent on (i) food and (ii) beverages, and (d) what entertainment was provided and what did it cost.

Mr Downer—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:
Information on the costs of the overseas travel listed is contained in the attached table. The table was prepared by my department with the assistance of the Department of Finance and Administration and the Department of Defence. Further breakdown of the detail of these costs would entail a significant diversion of resources and in the circumstances I do not consider the additional work can be justified.
Mr Rudd asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs, in writing, on 16 March 2005:

(1) In respect of his travel to Japan and China in November 2002, (a) what was the total cost of travel and accommodation for him and his party, (b) what sum was spent on airline travel (i) in total and (ii) for his personal staff, (c) how many personal staff accompanied him, (d) what class of air travel was used by (i) his personal staff and (ii) departmental staff, (e) what sum was spent on ground transport, (f) what modes of ground transport were used, (g) how many hotel rooms were booked for him and his staff, and (h) what standard of hotel room was booked for (i) him and (ii) staff.

(2) In respect of each official function he hosted on this trip, (a) when and where was it held, (b) how many official guests attended, (c) what sum was spent on (i) food and (ii) beverages, and (d) what entertainment was provided and what did it cost.

Mr Downer—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

Information on the costs of the overseas travel listed is contained in the attached table. The table was prepared by my department with the assistance of the Department of Finance and Administration and the Department of Defence. Further breakdown of the detail of these costs would entail a significant diversion of resources and in the circumstances I do not consider the additional work can be justified.

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
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<th>(a) what was the total cost of travel and accommodation for him and his personal staff</th>
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<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6-12 Nov</td>
<td>Japan and China</td>
<td>$34,806.79</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Visit</th>
<th>(a) what was the total cost of travel and accommodation for him and his personal staff</th>
<th>(c) how many personal staff accompanied him</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6-12 Nov</td>
<td>Japan and China</td>
<td>$34,806.79</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mr Rudd asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs, in writing, on 16 March 2005:

(1) In respect of his travel to Papua New Guinea in November 2002, (a) what was the total cost of travel and accommodation for him and his party, (b) what sum was spent on airline travel (i) in total and (ii) for his personal staff, (c) how many personal staff accompanied him, (d) what class of air travel was used by (i) his personal staff and (ii) departmental staff, (e) what sum was spent on ground transport, (f) what modes of ground transport were used, (g) how many hotel rooms were booked for him and his staff, and (h) what standard of hotel room was booked for (i) him and (ii) staff.
(2) In respect of each official function he hosted on this trip, (a) when and where was it held, (b) how many official guests attended, (c) what sum was spent on (i) food and (ii) beverages, and (d) what entertainment was provided and what did it cost.

Mr Downer—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

Information on the costs of the overseas travel listed is contained in the attached table. The table was prepared by my department with the assistance of the Department of Finance and Administration and the Department of Defence. Further breakdown of the detail of these costs would entail a significant diversion of resources and in the circumstances I do not consider the additional work can be justified.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Visit</th>
<th>(a) what was the total cost of travel and accommodation for him and his personal staff</th>
<th>(c) how many personal staff accompanied him</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>14-16 Nov</td>
<td>Papua New Guinea</td>
<td>$31,888.65</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Figure includes the cost of a VIP flight for entire Parliamentary Delegation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overseas Travel  
(Question No. 868)

Mr Rudd asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs, in writing, on 16 March 2005:
(1) In respect of his travel to the Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Samoa and New Zealand in December 2002, (a) what was the total cost of travel and accommodation for him and his party, (b) what sum was spent on airline travel (i) in total and (ii) for his personal staff, (c) how many personal staff accompanied him, (d) what class of air travel was used by (i) his personal staff and (ii) departmental staff, (e) what sum was spent on ground transport, (f) what modes of ground transport were used, (g) how many hotel rooms were booked for him and his staff, and (h) what standard of hotel room was booked for (i) him and (ii) staff.
(2) In respect of each official function he hosted on this trip, (a) when and where was it held, (b) how many official guests attended, (c) what sum was spent on (i) food and (ii) beverages, and (d) what entertainment was provided and what did it cost.

Mr Downer—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

Information on the costs of the overseas travel listed is contained in the attached table. The table was prepared by my department with the assistance of the Department of Finance and Administration and the Department of Defence. Further breakdown of the detail of these costs would entail a significant diversion of resources and in the circumstances I do not consider the additional work can be justified.
**Overseas Travel**  
*(Question No. 869)*

**Mr Rudd** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs, in writing, on 16 March 2005:

1. In respect of his travel to Switzerland, Belgium, Germany and France in January-February 2003, (a) what was the total cost of travel and accommodation for him and his party, (b) what sum was spent on airline travel (i) in total and (ii) for his personal staff, (c) how many personal staff accompanied him, (d) what class of air travel was used by (i) his personal staff and (ii) departmental staff, (e) what sum was spent on ground transport, (f) what modes of ground transport were used, (g) how many hotel rooms were booked for him and his staff, and (h) what standard of hotel room was booked for (i) him and (ii) staff.

2. In respect of each official function he hosted on this trip, (a) when and where was it held, (b) how many official guests attended, (c) what sum was spent on (i) food and (ii) beverages, and (d) what entertainment was provided and what did it cost.

**Mr Downer**—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

Information on the costs of the overseas travel listed is contained in the attached table. The table was prepared by my department with the assistance of the Department of Finance and Administration and the Department of Defence. Further breakdown of the detail of these costs would entail a significant diversion of resources and in the circumstances I do not consider the additional work can be justified.

**Overseas Travel**  
*(Question No. 870)*

**Mr Rudd** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs, in writing, on 16 March 2005:

1. In respect of his travel to the Republic of Korea in February 2003, (a) what was the total cost of travel and accommodation for him and his party, (b) what sum was spent on airline travel (i) in total and (ii) for his personal staff, (c) how many personal staff accompanied him, (d) what class of air travel was used by (i) his personal staff and (ii) departmental staff, (e) what sum was spent on ground transport, (f) what modes of ground transport were used, (g) how many hotel rooms were booked for him and his staff, and (h) what standard of hotel room was booked for (i) him and (ii) staff.

2. In respect of each official function he hosted on this trip, (a) when and where was it held, (b) how many official guests attended, (c) what sum was spent on (i) food and (ii) beverages, and (d) what entertainment was provided and what did it cost.

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Visit</th>
<th>What was the total cost of travel and accommodation for him and his personal staff</th>
<th>How many personal staff accompanied him</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>17-22 Dec</td>
<td>Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Samoa and New Zealand</td>
<td>$61,529.18</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Figure includes the cost of a VIP flight for entire Parliamentary Delegation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Visit</th>
<th>What was the total cost of travel and accommodation for him and his personal staff</th>
<th>How many personal staff accompanied him</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>23 Jan-2 Feb</td>
<td>Switzerland, Belgium, Germany and France (stopover Singapore)</td>
<td>$51,353.24</td>
<td>2</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Mr Downer—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

Information on the costs of the overseas travel listed is contained in the attached table. The table was prepared by my department with the assistance of the Department of Finance and Administration and the Department of Defence. Further breakdown of the detail of these costs would entail a significant diversion of resources and in the circumstances I do not consider the additional work can be justified.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>1. Visit</th>
<th>(a) what was the total cost of travel and accommodation for him and his personal staff</th>
<th>(c) how many personal staff accompanied him</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>24-26 Feb</td>
<td>Republic of Korea</td>
<td>$15,944.17</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>10-12 Mar</td>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>$26,220.44</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Overseas Travel
(Question No. 871)

Mr Rudd asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs, in writing, on 16 March 2005:

(1) In respect of his travel to Indonesia in March 2003, (a) what was the total cost of travel and accommodation for him and his party, (b) what sum was spent on airline travel (i) in total and (ii) for his personal staff, (c) how many personal staff accompanied him, (d) what class of air travel was used by (i) his personal staff and (ii) departmental staff, (e) what sum was spent on ground transport, (f) what modes of ground transport were used, (g) how many hotel rooms were booked for him and his staff, and (h) what standard of hotel room was booked for (i) him and (ii) staff.

(2) In respect of each official function he hosted on this trip, (a) when and where was it held, (b) how many official guests attended, (c) what sum was spent on (i) food and (ii) beverages, and (d) what entertainment was provided and what did it cost.

Mr Downer—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

Information on the costs of the overseas travel listed is contained in the attached table. The table was prepared by my department with the assistance of the Department of Finance and Administration and the Department of Defence. Further breakdown of the detail of these costs would entail a significant diversion of resources and in the circumstances I do not consider the additional work can be justified.
Overseas Travel
(Question No. 872)

Mr Rudd asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs, in writing, on 16 March 2005:

(1) In respect of his travel to the USA in March-April 2003, (a) what was the total cost of travel and accommodation for him and his party, (b) what sum was spent on airline travel (i) in total and (ii) for his personal staff, (c) how many personal staff accompanied him, (d) what class of air travel was used by (i) his personal staff and (ii) departmental staff, (e) what sum was spent on ground transport, (f) what modes of ground transport were used, (g) how many hotel rooms were booked for him and his staff, and (h) what standard of hotel room was booked for (i) him and (ii) staff.

(2) In respect of each official function he hosted on this trip, (a) when and where was it held, (b) how many official guests attended, (c) what sum was spent on (i) food and (ii) beverages, and (d) what entertainment was provided and what did it cost.

Mr Downer—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:
Information on the costs of the overseas travel listed is contained in the attached table. The table was prepared by my department with the assistance of the Department of Finance and Administration and the Department of Defence. Further breakdown of the detail of these costs would entail a significant diversion of resources and in the circumstances I do not consider the additional work can be justified.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>I. Visit</th>
<th>(a) what was the total cost of travel and accommodation for him and his personal staff</th>
<th>(c) how many personal staff accompanied him</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>31 Mar - 5 Apr 2003 USA</td>
<td>$66,995.12</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overseas Travel
(Question No. 873)

Mr Rudd asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs, in writing, on 16 March 2005:

(1) In respect of his travel to Indonesia in April 2003, (a) what was the total cost of travel and accommodation for him and his party, (b) what sum was spent on airline travel (i) in total and (ii) for his personal staff, (c) how many personal staff accompanied him, (d) what class of air travel was used by (i) his personal staff and (ii) departmental staff, (e) what sum was spent on ground transport, (f) what modes of ground transport were used, (g) how many hotel rooms were booked for him and his staff, and (h) what standard of hotel room was booked for (i) him and (ii) staff.

(2) In respect of each official function he hosted on this trip, (a) when and where was it held, (b) how many official guests attended, (c) what sum was spent on (i) food and (ii) beverages, and (d) what entertainment was provided and what did it cost.

Mr Downer—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:
Information on the costs of the overseas travel listed is contained in the attached table. The table was prepared by my department with the assistance of the Department of Finance and Administration and the Department of Defence. Further breakdown of the detail of these costs would entail a significant diversion of resources and in the circumstances I do not consider the additional work can be justified.
Mr Rudd asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs, in writing, on 16 March 2005:

(1) In respect of his travel to Japan, the UK, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Iraq, Iran and Sri Lanka in May 2003, (a) what was the total cost of travel and accommodation for him and his party, (b) what sum was spent on airline travel (i) in total and (ii) for his personal staff, (c) how many personal staff accompanied him, (d) what class of air travel was used by (i) his personal staff and (ii) departmental staff, (e) what sum was spent on ground transport, (f) what modes of ground transport were used, (g) how many hotel rooms were booked for him and his staff, and (h) what standard of hotel room was booked for (i) him and (ii) staff.

(2) In respect of each official function he hosted on this trip, (a) when and where was it held, (b) how many official guests attended, (c) what sum was spent on (i) food and (ii) beverages, and (d) what entertainment was provided and what did it cost.

Mr Downer—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

Information on the costs of the overseas travel listed is contained in the attached table. The table was prepared by my department with the assistance of the Department of Finance and Administration and the Department of Defence. Further breakdown of the detail of these costs would entail a significant diversion of resources and in the circumstances I do not consider the additional work can be justified.

Mr Rudd asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs, in writing, on 16 March 2005:

(1) In respect of his travel to Cambodia in June 2003, (a) what was the total cost of travel and accommodation for him and his party, (b) what sum was spent on airline travel (i) in total and (ii) for his personal staff, (c) how many personal staff accompanied him, (d) what class of air travel was used by (i) his personal staff and (ii) departmental staff, (e) what sum was spent on ground transport, (f) what modes of ground transport were used, (g) how many hotel rooms were booked for him and his staff, and (h) what standard of hotel room was booked for (i) him and (ii) staff.
(2) In respect of each official function he hosted on this trip, (a) when and where was it held, (b) how many official guests attended, (c) what sum was spent on (i) food and (ii) beverages, and (d) what entertainment was provided and what did it cost.

Mr Downer—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

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<th>(a) what was the total cost of travel and accommodation for him and his personal staff</th>
<th>(c) how many personal staff accompanied him</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>17-20 Jun</td>
<td>Cambodia</td>
<td>$58,854.73</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Overseas Travel**  
(Question No. 876)

Mr Rudd asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs, in writing, on 16 March 2005:

(1) In respect of his travel to Singapore and Vietnam in July 2003, (a) what was the total cost of travel and accommodation for him and his party, (b) what sum was spent on airline travel (i) in total and (ii) for his personal staff, (c) how many personal staff accompanied him, (d) what class of air travel was used by (i) his personal staff and (ii) departmental staff, (e) what sum was spent on ground transport, (f) what modes of ground transport were used, (g) how many hotel rooms were booked for him and his staff, and (h) what standard of hotel room was booked for (i) him and (ii) staff.

(2) In respect of each official function he hosted on this trip, (a) when and where was it held, (b) how many official guests attended, (c) what sum was spent on (i) food and (ii) beverages, and (d) what entertainment was provided and what did it cost.

Mr Downer—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

Information on the costs of the overseas travel listed is contained in the attached table. The table was prepared by my department with the assistance of the Department of Finance and Administration and the Department of Defence. Further breakdown of the detail of these costs would entail a significant diversion of resources and in the circumstances I do not consider the additional work can be justified.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Visit</th>
<th>(a) what was the total cost of travel and accommodation for him and his personal staff</th>
<th>(c) how many personal staff accompanied him</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>26-30 Jul</td>
<td>Singapore and Vietnam</td>
<td>$28,177.70</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Overseas Travel**  
(Question No. 877)

Mr Rudd asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs, in writing, on 16 March 2005:

(1) In respect of his travel to Solomon Islands in July-August 2003, (a) what was the total cost of travel and accommodation for him and his party, (b) what sum was spent on airline travel (i) in total and (ii) for his personal staff, (c) how many personal staff accompanied him, (d) what class of air travel
was used by (i) his personal staff and (ii) departmental staff, (e) what sum was spent on ground transport, (f) what modes of ground transport were used, (g) how many hotel rooms were booked for him and his staff, and (h) what standard of hotel room was booked for (i) him and (ii) staff.

(2) In respect of each official function he hosted on this trip, (a) when and where was it held, (b) how many official guests attended, (c) what sum was spent on (i) food and (ii) beverages, and (d) what entertainment was provided and what did it cost.

Mr Downer—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

Information on the costs of the overseas travel listed is contained in the attached table. The table was prepared by my department with the assistance of the Department of Finance and Administration and the Department of Defence. Further breakdown of the detail of these costs would entail a significant diversion of resources and in the circumstances I do not consider the additional work can be justified.

2003

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>1. Visit</th>
<th>(a) what was the total cost of travel and accommodation for him and his personal staff</th>
<th>(c) how many personal staff accompanied him</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>31 Jul-1 Aug</td>
<td>Solomon Islands</td>
<td>$19,075.16</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Overseas Travel**

(Question No. 878)

Mr Rudd asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs, in writing, on 16 March 2005:

(1) In respect of his travel to Papua New Guinea in September 2003, (a) what was the total cost of travel and accommodation for him and his party, (b) what sum was spent on airline travel (i) in total and (ii) for his personal staff, (c) how many personal staff accompanied him, (d) what class of air travel was used by (i) his personal staff and (ii) departmental staff, (e) what sum was spent on ground transport, (f) what modes of ground transport were used, (g) how many hotel rooms were booked for him and his staff, and (h) what standard of hotel room was booked for (i) him and (ii) staff.

(2) In respect of each official function he hosted on this trip, (a) when and where was it held, (b) how many official guests attended, (c) what sum was spent on (i) food and (ii) beverages, and (d) what entertainment was provided and what did it cost.

Mr Downer—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

Information on the costs of the overseas travel listed is contained in the attached table. The table was prepared by my department with the assistance of the Department of Finance and Administration and the Department of Defence. Further breakdown of the detail of these costs would entail a significant diversion of resources and in the circumstances I do not consider the additional work can be justified.

2003

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>1. Visit</th>
<th>(a) what was the total cost of travel and accommodation for him and his personal staff</th>
<th>(c) how many personal staff accompanied him</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>17-18 Sept</td>
<td>Papua New Guinea</td>
<td>$17,995.20</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Overseas Travel
(Question No. 879)

Mr Rudd asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs, in writing, on 16 March 2005:

(1) In respect of his travel to the USA and Italy in September 2003, (a) what was the total cost of travel and accommodation for him and his party, (b) what sum was spent on airline travel (i) in total and (ii) for his personal staff, (c) how many personal staff accompanied him, (d) what class of air travel was used by (i) his personal staff and (ii) departmental staff, (e) what sum was spent on ground transport, (f) what modes of ground transport were used, (g) how many hotel rooms were booked for him and his staff, and (h) what standard of hotel room was booked for (i) him and (ii) staff.

(2) In respect of each official function he hosted on this trip, (a) when and where was it held, (b) how many official guests attended, (c) what sum was spent on (i) food and (ii) beverages, and (d) what entertainment was provided and what did it cost.

Mr Downer—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

Information on the costs of the overseas travel listed is contained in the attached table. The table was prepared by my department with the assistance of the Department of Finance and Administration and the Department of Defence. Further breakdown of the detail of these costs would entail a significant diversion of resources and in the circumstances I do not consider the additional work can be justified.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>1. Visit</th>
<th>(a) what was the total cost of travel and accommodation for him and his personal staff</th>
<th>(c) how many personal staff accompanied him</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>21 Sept- 2 Oct USA and Italy</td>
<td>$81,817.46</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overseas Travel
(Question No. 880)

Mr Rudd asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs, in writing, on 16 March 2005:

(1) In respect of his travel to Thailand in October 2003, (a) what was the total cost of travel and accommodation for him and his party, (b) what sum was spent on airline travel (i) in total and (ii) for his personal staff, (c) how many personal staff accompanied him, (d) what class of air travel was used by (i) his personal staff and (ii) departmental staff, (e) what sum was spent on ground transport, (f) what modes of ground transport were used, (g) how many hotel rooms were booked for him and his staff, and (h) what standard of hotel room was booked for (i) him and (ii) staff.

(2) In respect of each official function he hosted on this trip, (a) when and where was it held, (b) how many official guests attended, (c) what sum was spent on (i) food and (ii) beverages, and (d) what entertainment was provided and what did it cost.

Mr Downer—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

Information on the costs of the overseas travel listed is contained in the attached table. The table was prepared by my department with the assistance of the Department of Finance and Administration and the Department of Defence. Further breakdown of the detail of these costs would entail a significant diversion of resources and in the circumstances I do not consider the additional work can be justified.
Thursday, 26 May 2005

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

2003

Date 1. Visit (a) what was the total cost of travel and accommodation for him and his personal staff (c) how many personal staff accompanied him

17-18 Oct 2003 Thailand $31,640.39 2

Mr Rudd asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs, in writing, on 16 March 2005:

(1) In respect of his travel to the UK, the Netherlands and Singapore in November 2003, (a) what was the total cost of travel and accommodation for him and his party, (b) what sum was spent on airline travel (i) in total and (ii) for his personal staff, (c) how many personal staff accompanied him, (d) what class of air travel was used by (i) his personal staff and (ii) departmental staff, (e) what sum was spent on ground transport, (f) what modes of ground transport were used, (g) how many hotel rooms were booked for him and his staff, and (h) what standard of hotel room was booked for (i) him and (ii) staff.

(2) In respect of each official function he hosted on this trip, (a) when and where was it held, (b) how many official guests attended, (c) what sum was spent on (i) food and (ii) beverages, and (d) what entertainment was provided and what did it cost.

Mr Downer—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

Information on the costs of the overseas travel listed is contained in the attached table. The table was prepared by my department with the assistance of the Department of Finance and Administration and the Department of Defence. Further breakdown of the detail of these costs would entail a significant diversion of resources and in the circumstances I do not consider the additional work can be justified.

2003

Date 1. Visit (a) what was the total cost of travel and accommodation for him and his personal staff (c) how many personal staff accompanied him

10-14 Nov 2003 UK, the Netherlands and Singapore $75,912.14 2

Mr Rudd asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs, in writing, on 16 March 2005:

(1) In respect of his travel to Indonesia in December 2003, (a) what was the total cost of travel and accommodation for him and his party, (b) what sum was spent on airline travel (i) in total and (ii) for his personal staff, (c) how many personal staff accompanied him, (d) what class of air travel was used by (i) his personal staff and (ii) departmental staff, (e) what sum was spent on ground transport, (f) what modes of ground transport were used, (g) how many hotel rooms were booked for him and his staff, and (h) what standard of hotel room was booked for (i) him and (ii) staff.

(2) In respect of each official function he hosted on this trip, (a) when and where was it held, (b) how many official guests attended, (c) what sum was spent on (i) food and (ii) beverages, and (d) what entertainment was provided and what did it cost.

Overseas Travel
(Question No. 881)

Overseas Travel
(Question No. 882)

QUESTIONS IN WRITING
Mr Downer—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

Information on the costs of the overseas travel listed is contained in the attached table. The table was prepared by my department with the assistance of the Department of Finance and Administration and the Department of Defence. Further breakdown of the detail of these costs would entail a significant diversion of resources and in the circumstances I do not consider the additional work can be justified.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Visit</th>
<th>(a) what was the total cost of travel and accommodation for him and his personal staff</th>
<th>(c) how many personal staff accompanied him</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7-8 Dec</td>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>$28,235.14</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overseas Travel
(Question No. 883)

Mr Rudd asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs, in writing, on 16 March 2005:

(1) In respect of his travel to New Zealand in December 2003, (a) what was the total cost of travel and accommodation for him and his party, (b) what sum was spent on airline travel (i) in total and (ii) for his personal staff, (c) how many personal staff accompanied him, (d) what class of air travel was used by (i) his personal staff and (ii) departmental staff, (e) what sum was spent on ground transport, (f) what modes of ground transport were used, (g) how many hotel rooms were booked for him and his staff, and (h) what standard of hotel room was booked for (i) him and (ii) staff.

(2) In respect of each official function he hosted on this trip, (a) when and where was it held, (b) how many official guests attended, (c) what sum was spent on (i) food and (ii) beverages, and (d) what entertainment was provided and what did it cost.

Mr Downer—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

Information on the costs of the overseas travel listed is contained in the attached table. The table was prepared by my department with the assistance of the Department of Finance and Administration and the Department of Defence. Further breakdown of the detail of these costs would entail a significant diversion of resources and in the circumstances I do not consider the additional work can be justified.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Visit</th>
<th>(a) what was the total cost of travel and accommodation for him and his personal staff</th>
<th>(c) how many personal staff accompanied him</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13-14 Dec</td>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>$8,378.93</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Overseas Travel
(Question No. 884)

Mr Rudd asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs, in writing, on 16 March 2005:

(1) In respect of his travel to Tonga and Fiji in December 2003, (a) what was the total cost of travel and accommodation for him and his party, (b) what sum was spent on airline travel (i) in total and (ii) for his personal staff, (c) how many personal staff accompanied him, (d) what class of air travel was used by (i) his personal staff and (ii) departmental staff, (e) what sum was spent on ground transport, (f) what modes of ground transport were used, (g) how many hotel rooms were booked for him and his staff, and (h) what standard of hotel room was booked for (i) him and (ii) staff.

QUESTIONS IN WRITING
(2) In respect of each official function he hosted on this trip, (a) when and where it was held, (b) how many official guests attended, (c) what sum was spent on (i) food and (ii) beverages, and (d) what entertainment was provided and what did it cost.

Mr Downer—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

Information on the costs of the overseas travel listed is contained in the attached table. The table was prepared by my department with the assistance of the Department of Finance and Administration and the Department of Defence. Further breakdown of the detail of these costs would entail a significant diversion of resources and in the circumstances I do not consider the additional work can be justified.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Visit</th>
<th>(a) what was the total cost of travel and accommodation for him and his personal staff</th>
<th>(c) how many personal staff accompanied him</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16-19 Dec</td>
<td>Tonga and Fiji</td>
<td>$24,058.02</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overseas Travel

(Question No. 885)

Mr Rudd asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs, in writing, on 16 March 2005:

(1) In respect of his travel to the US, Ireland, Switzerland and the Middle East in January 2004, (a) what was the total cost of travel and accommodation for him and his party, (b) what sum was spent on airline travel (i) in total and (ii) for his personal staff, (c) how many personal staff accompanied him, (d) what class of air travel was used by (i) his personal staff and (ii) departmental staff, (e) what sum was spent on ground transport, (f) what modes of ground transport were used, (g) how many hotel rooms were booked for him and his staff, and (h) what standard of hotel room was booked for (i) him and (ii) staff.

(2) In respect of each official function he hosted on this trip, (a) when and where it was held, (b) how many official guests attended, (c) what sum was spent on (i) food and (ii) beverages, and (d) what entertainment was provided and what did it cost.

Mr Downer—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

Information on the costs of the overseas travel listed is contained in the attached table. The table was prepared by my department with the assistance of the Department of Finance and Administration and the Department of Defence. Further breakdown of the detail of these costs would entail a significant diversion of resources and in the circumstances I do not consider the additional work can be justified.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Visit</th>
<th>the total cost of travel and accommodation for him and his personal staff</th>
<th>(c) how many personal staff accompanied him</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>17-28 Jan</td>
<td>USA, Ireland, Switzerland, Israel, Jordan, UAE</td>
<td>$55,295.31</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overseas Travel

(Question No. 886)

Mr Rudd asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs, in writing, on 16 March 2005:
In respect of his travel to Belgium and Libya in May 2004, (a) what was the total cost of travel and accommodation for him and his party, (b) what sum was spent on airline travel (i) in total and (ii) for his personal staff, (c) how many personal staff accompanied him, (d) what class of air travel was used by (i) his personal staff and (ii) departmental staff, (e) what sum was spent on ground transport, (f) what modes of ground transport were used, (g) how many hotel rooms were booked for him and his staff, and (h) what standard of hotel room was booked for (i) him and (ii) staff.

In respect of each official function he hosted on this trip, (a) when and where was it held, (b) how many official guests attended, (c) what sum was spent on (i) food and (ii) beverages, and (d) what entertainment was provided and what did it cost.

Mr Downer—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

Information on the costs of the overseas travel listed is contained in the attached table. The table was prepared by my department with the assistance of the Department of Finance and Administration and the Department of Defence. Further breakdown of the detail of these costs would entail a significant diversion of resources and in the circumstances I do not consider the additional work can be justified.

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<th>Date</th>
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<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10-11 Jun 2004</td>
<td>Malaysia and Singapore</td>
<td>$10,589.10</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overseas Travel
(Question No. 887)

Mr Rudd asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs, in writing, on 16 March 2005:

(1) In respect of his travel to Malaysia and Singapore in June 2004, (a) what was the total cost of travel and accommodation for him and his party, (b) what sum was spent on airline travel (i) in total and (ii) for his personal staff, (c) how many personal staff accompanied him, (d) what class of air travel was used by (i) his personal staff and (ii) departmental staff, (e) what sum was spent on ground transport, (f) what modes of ground transport were used, (g) how many hotel rooms were booked for him and his staff, and (h) what standard of hotel room was booked for (i) him and (ii) staff.

(2) In respect of each official function he hosted on this trip, (a) when and where was it held, (b) how many official guests attended, (c) what sum was spent on (i) food and (ii) beverages, and (d) what entertainment was provided and what did it cost.

Mr Downer—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

Information on the costs of the overseas travel listed is contained in the attached table. The table was prepared by my department with the assistance of the Department of Finance and Administration and the Department of Defence. Further breakdown of the detail of these costs would entail a significant diversion of resources and in the circumstances I do not consider the additional work can be justified.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
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<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10-11 Jun 2004</td>
<td>Malaysia and Singapore</td>
<td>$10,589.10</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Overseas Travel
(Question Nos 888 to 890)

Mr Rudd asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs, in writing, on 16 March 2005:

(1) In respect of his travel to Papua New Guinea, Indonesia, UK, USA in June 2004, (a) what was the total cost of travel and accommodation for him and his party, (b) what sum was spent on airline travel (i) in total and (ii) for his personal staff, (c) how many personal staff accompanied him, (d) what class of air travel was used by (i) his personal staff and (ii) departmental staff, (e) what sum was spent on ground transport, (f) what modes of ground transport were used, (g) how many hotel rooms were booked for him and his staff, and (h) what standard of hotel room was booked for (i) him and (ii) staff.

(2) In respect of each official function he hosted on this trip, (a) when and where was it held, (b) how many official guests attended, (c) what sum was spent on (i) food and (ii) beverages, and (d) what entertainment was provided and what did it cost.

Mr Downer—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

Information on the costs of the overseas travel listed is contained in the attached table. The table was prepared by my department with the assistance of the Department of Finance and Administration and the Department of Defence. Further breakdown of the detail of these costs would entail a significant diversion of resources and in the circumstances I do not consider the additional work can be justified.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Visit</th>
<th>1.</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>30 Jun – 9 Jul</td>
<td>PNG, Indonesia, UK, USA (transit Singapore)</td>
<td>$141,036.14</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overseas Travel
(Question No. 891)

Mr Rudd asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs, in writing, on 16 March 2005:

(1) In respect of his travel to Thailand in July 2004, (a) what was the total cost of travel and accommodation for him and his party, (b) what sum was spent on airline travel (i) in total and (ii) for his personal staff, (c) how many personal staff accompanied him, (d) what class of air travel was used by (i) his personal staff and (ii) departmental staff, (e) what sum was spent on ground transport, (f) what modes of ground transport were used, (g) how many hotel rooms were booked for him and his staff, and (h) what standard of hotel room was booked for (i) him and (ii) staff.

(2) In respect of each official function he hosted on this trip, (a) when and where was it held, (b) how many official guests attended, (c) what sum was spent on (i) food and (ii) beverages, and (d) what entertainment was provided and what did it cost.

Mr Downer—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

Information on the costs of the overseas travel listed is contained in the attached table. The table was prepared by my department with the assistance of the Department of Finance and Administration and the Department of Defence. Further breakdown of the detail of these costs would entail a significant diversion of resources and in the circumstances I do not consider the additional work can be justified.
Date | Visit | (a) what was the total cost of travel and accommodation for him and his personal staff | (c) how many personal staff accompanied him | Comment |
--- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
11-12 July | Thailand | $16,617.67 | 1 |

**Overseas Travel**  
*(Question No. 892)*

**Mr Rudd** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs, in writing, on 16 March 2005:

1. In respect of his travel to Indonesia in January 2005, (a) what was the total cost of travel and accommodation for him and his party, (b) what sum was spent on airline travel (i) in total and (ii) for his personal staff, (c) how many personal staff accompanied him, (d) what class of air travel was used by (i) his personal staff and (ii) departmental staff, (e) what sum was spent on ground transport, (f) what modes of ground transport were used, (g) how many hotel rooms were booked for him and his staff, and (h) what standard of hotel room was booked for (i) him and (ii) staff.

2. In respect of each official function he hosted on this trip, (a) when and where was it held, (b) how many official guests attended, (c) what sum was spent on (i) food and (ii) beverages, and (d) what entertainment was provided and what did it cost.

**Mr Downer**—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

Information on the costs of the overseas travel listed is contained in the attached table. The table was prepared by my department with the assistance of the Department of Finance and Administration and the Department of Defence. Further breakdown of the detail of these costs would entail a significant diversion of resources and in the circumstances I do not consider the additional work can be justified.

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<th>(c) how many personal staff accompanied him</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3-6 Jan</td>
<td>Thailand, Indonesia</td>
<td>$38,889.39</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Overseas Travel**  
*(Question No. 893)*

**Mr Rudd** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs, in writing, on 16 March 2005:

1. In respect of his travel to the USA in January 2005, (a) what was the total cost of travel and accommodation for him and his party, (b) what sum was spent on airline travel (i) in total and (ii) for his personal staff, (c) how many personal staff accompanied him, (d) what class of air travel was used by (i) his personal staff and (ii) departmental staff, (e) what sum was spent on ground transport, (f) what modes of ground transport were used, (g) how many hotel rooms were booked for him and his staff, and (h) what standard of hotel room was booked for (i) him and (ii) staff.

2. In respect of each official function he hosted on this trip, (a) when and where was it held, (b) how many official guests attended, (c) what sum was spent on (i) food and (ii) beverages, and (d) what entertainment was provided and what did it cost.

**Mr Downer**—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:
Information on the costs of the overseas travel listed is contained in the attached table. The table was prepared by my department with the assistance of the Department of Finance and Administration and the Department of Defence. Further breakdown of the detail of these costs would entail a significant diversion of resources and in the circumstances I do not consider the additional work can be justified.

2005

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Visit</th>
<th>(a) what was the total cost of travel and accommodation for him and his personal staff</th>
<th>(c) how many personal staff accompanied him</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15-20 Jan</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>$88,118.79</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Final figures for financial year 2004-05 are not yet available

**Overseas Travel**  
(Question No. 894)

**Mr Rudd** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs, in writing, on 16 March 2005:

1. In respect of his travel to the UK, France, Belgium and Luxembourg in January-February 2005, (a) what was the total cost of travel and accommodation for him and his party, (b) what sum was spent on airline travel (i) in total and (ii) for his personal staff, (c) how many personal staff accompanied him, (d) what class of air travel was used by (i) his personal staff and (ii) departmental staff, (e) what sum was spent on ground transport, (f) what modes of ground transport were used, (g) how many hotel rooms were booked for him and his staff, and (h) what standard of hotel room was booked for (i) him and (ii) staff.

2. In respect of each official function he hosted on this trip, (a) when and where was it held, (b) how many official guests attended, (c) what sum was spent on (i) food and (ii) beverages, and (d) what entertainment was provided and what did it cost.

**Mr Downer**—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

Information on the costs of the overseas travel listed is contained in the attached table. The table was prepared by my department with the assistance of the Department of Finance and Administration and the Department of Defence. Further breakdown of the detail of these costs would entail a significant diversion of resources and in the circumstances I do not consider the additional work can be justified.

2005

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Visit</th>
<th>(a) what was the total cost of travel and accommodation for him and his personal staff</th>
<th>(c) how many personal staff accompanied him</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>28 Jan-3 Feb</td>
<td>UK, France, Belgium and Luxembourg</td>
<td>$53,879.96</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Cargo Reporting**  
(Question No. 1221)

**Mr McClelland** asked the Minister representing the Minister for Justice and Customs, in writing, on 10 May 2005:

What steps is the Minister taking to improve cargo reporting of container vessels arriving at Australian ports from the current rate of 16% of container reports being late reported.
Mr Ruddock—The Minister for Justice and Customs has provided the following answer to the honourable member’s question:

Customs is addressing late reporting through its Cargo Reporting Compliance Strategy which is pursued through the provision of feedback to industry concerning their level of compliance. The aim of the strategy is to achieve 100% of cargo reported prior to its arrival.

Customs recognises that the recent changes to cargo reporting requirements, which necessitate all cargo on a ship be reported before it arrives at its first Australian port, represents a change in practice for some sectors of industry. Cargo reporting procedures will have to be adjusted and Customs is assisting industry to meet the new reporting requirements prior to the introduction of penalties for late cargo reports following commencement of the relevant provisions in the International Trade Modernisation legislation later this year.

Drafting of Speeches
(Question No. 1353)

Mr Rudd asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs, in writing, on 12 May 2005:


(2) How many speeches that he asked to be drafted in (a) 1996, (b) 1997, (c) 1998, (d) 1999, (e) 2000, (f) 2001, (g) 2002, (h) 2003, (i) 2004, and (j) 2005 were sent back to the department for redrafting.

(3) How many speeches did the Parliamentary Secretary ask the department to draft in (a) 1996, (b) 1997, (c) 1998, (d) 1999, (e) 2000, (f) 2001, (g) 2002, (h) 2003, (i) 2004, and (j) 2005.

(4) How many speeches that the Parliamentary Secretary asked to be drafted in (a) 1996, (b) 1997, (c) 1998, (d) 1999, (e) 2000, (f) 2001, (g) 2002, (h) 2003, (i) 2004, and (j) 2005 were sent back to the department for redrafting.

Mr Downer—the answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows: I consider that the preparation of answers to the questions placed on notice would involve a significant diversion of departmental resources and, in the circumstances, I do not consider that the additional work can be justified.