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**SITTING DAYS—2005**

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**GOLD COAST** 95.7 FM  
**MELBOURNE**  1026 AM  
**ADELAIDE**   972 AM  
**PERTH**      585 AM  
**HOBART**     747 AM  
**NORTHERN TASMANIA**  92.5 FM  
**DARWIN**     102.5 FM
FORTY-FIRST PARLIAMENT
FIRST SESSION—FOURTH 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 Henry 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 Kim 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. Mark Anthony James Vaile MP
Deputy Leader—The Hon. Warren Errol Truss MP
Chief Whip—Mr John Alexander Forrest MP
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 David Danby MP and Ms Jill Griffiths Hall MP

Printed by authority of the House of Representatives
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<td>Vasta, Ross Xavier</td>
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<td>Wakelin, Barry Hugh</td>
<td>Grey, SA</td>
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<td>Washer, Malcolm James</td>
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<td>Wilkie, Kim William</td>
<td>Swan, WA</td>
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<td>Windsor, Antony Harold Curties</td>
<td>New England, NSW</td>
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<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
Minister for Trade and Deputy Prime Minister
Treasurer
Minister for Transport and Regional Services
Minister for Defence and Leader of the Government in the Senate
Minister for Foreign Affairs
Minister for Health and Ageing and Leader of the House
Attorney-General
Minister for Finance and Administration, Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate and Vice-President of the Executive Council
Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry and Deputy Leader of the House
Minister for Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Indigenous Affairs
Minister for Education, Science and Training
Minister for Family and Community Services and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Women’s Issues
Minister for Industry, Tourism and Resources
Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service
Minister for Communications, Information Technology and the Arts
Minister for the Environment and Heritage

The Hon. John Winston Howard MP
The Hon. Mark Anthony James Vaile MP
The Hon. Peter Howard Costello MP
Senator the Hon. Robert Murray Hill
The Hon. Alexander John Gosse Downer MP
The Hon. Anthony John Abbott MP
The Hon. Philip Maxwell Ruddock MP
Senator the Hon. Nicholas Hugh Minchin
The Hon. Peter John McGauran MP
Senator the Hon. Amanda Eloise Vanstone
The Hon. Dr Brendan John Nelson MP
Senator the Hon. Kay Christine Lesley Patterson
The Hon. Ian Elgin Macfarlane MP
The Hon. Kevin James Andrews MP
Senator the Hon. Helen Lloyd Coonan
Senator the Hon. Ian Gordon Campbell

(The above ministers constitute the cabinet)
HOWARD MINISTRY—continued

Minister for Justice and Customs and Manager of Government Business in the Senate
Senator the Hon. Christopher Martin Ellison
Minister for Fisheries, Forestry and Conservation
Senator the Hon. Ian Douglas Macdonald
Minister for the Arts and Sport
Senator the Hon. Charles Roderick Kemp
Minister for Human Services
The Hon. Joseph Benedict Hockey MP
Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs
The Hon. John Kenneth Cobb MP

Minister for Revenue and Assistant Treasurer
Special Minister of State
The Hon. Malcolm Thomas Brough MP
MINISTER FOR V ocational and Technical Education
and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister
Senator the Hon. Eric Abetz
Minister for Ageing
The Hon. Julie Isabel Bishop MP
Minister for Small Business and Tourism
The Hon. Frances Esther Bailey MP
Minister for Local Government, Territories and Roads
The Hon. James Eric Lloyd MP
Minister for Veterans’ Affairs and Minister Assisting the Minister for Defence
The Hon. De-Anne Margaret Kelly MP
Minister for Workforce Participation
The Hon. Peter Craig Dutton MP
Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Finance and Administration
The Hon. Dr Sharman Nancy Stone MP
Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Industry, Tourism and Resources
The Hon. Warren George Entsch MP
Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Health and Ageing
The Hon. Christopher Maurice Pyne MP
Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Defence
The Hon. Teresa Gambaro MP
Parliamentary Secretary (Trade)
Senator the Hon. John Alexander Lindsay Macdonald
Parliamentary Secretary (Foreign Affairs) and Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs
The Hon. Bruce Fredrick Billson MP
Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister
The Hon. Gary Roy Nairn MP
Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasurer
The Hon. Christopher John Pearce MP
Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for the Environment and Heritage
The Hon. Gregory Andrew Hunt MP
Parliamentary Secretary (Children and Youth Affairs)
The Hon. Sussan Penelope Ley MP
Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Education, Science and Training
The Hon. Patrick Francis Farmer MP
Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
Senator the Hon. Richard Mansell Colbeck
SHADOW MINISTRY

Leader of the Opposition  The Hon. Kim Christian Beazley MP
Deputy Leader of the Opposition and Shadow Minister for Education, Training, Science and Research  Jennifer Louise Macklin MP
Leader of the Opposition in the Senate, Shadow Minister for Indigenous Affairs and Shadow Minister for Family and Community Services  Senator Christopher Vaughan Evans
Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Senate and Shadow Minister for Communications and Information Technology  Senator Stephen Michael Conroy
Shadow Minister for Health and Manager of Opposition Business in the House  Julia Eileen Gillard MP
Shadow Treasurer  Wayne Maxwell Swan MP
Shadow Attorney-General  Nicola Louise Roxon MP
Shadow Minister for Industry, Infrastructure and Industrial Relations  Stephen Francis Smith MP
Shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade and Shadow Minister for International Security  Kevin Michael Rudd MP
Shadow Minister for Defence  Robert Bruce McClelland MP
Shadow Minister for Regional Development  The Hon. Simon Findlay Crean MP
Shadow Minister for Primary Industries, Resources, Forestry and Tourism  Martin John Ferguson MP
Shadow Minister for Environment and Heritage, Shadow Minister for Water and Deputy Manager of Opposition Business in the House  Anthony Norman Albanese MP
Shadow Minister for Housing, Shadow Minister for Urban Development and Shadow Minister for Local Government and Territories  Senator Kim John Carr
Shadow Minister for Public Accountability and Shadow Minister for Human Services  Kelvin John Thomson MP
Shadow Minister for Finance  Lindsay James Tanner MP
Shadow Minister for Superannuation and Intergenerational Finance and Shadow Minister for Banking and Financial Services  Senator the Hon. Nicholas John Sherry
Shadow Minister for Child Care, Shadow Minister for Youth and Shadow Minister for Women  Tanya Joan Plibersek MP
Shadow Minister for Employment and Workforce Participation and Shadow Minister for Corporate Governance and Responsibility  Senator Penelope Ying Yen Wong

(The above are shadow cabinet ministers)
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<thead>
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<th>Position</th>
<th>MP Name</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Laurie Donald Thomas Ferguson MP</td>
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<td>Shadow Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries</td>
<td>Gavan Michael O’Connor MP</td>
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<td>Shadow Assistant Treasurer, Shadow Minister for Revenue and Shadow Minister for Small Business and Competition</td>
<td>Joel Andrew Fitzgibbon MP</td>
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<td>Shadow Minister for Transport</td>
<td>Senator Kerry Williams Kelso O’Brien</td>
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<td>Shadow Minister for Sport and Recreation</td>
<td>Senator Kate Alexandra Lundy</td>
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<td>Shadow Minister for Homeland Security and Shadow Minister for Aviation and Transport Security</td>
<td>The Hon. Archibald Ronald Bevis MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Veterans’ Affairs and Shadow Special Minister of State</td>
<td>Alan Peter Griffin MP</td>
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<td>Shadow Minister for Defence Industry, Procurement and Personnel</td>
<td>Senator Thomas Mark Bishop</td>
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<td>Shadow Minister for Immigration</td>
<td>Anthony Stephen Burke MP</td>
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<td>Shadow Minister for Aged Care, Disabilities and Carers</td>
<td>Senator Jan Elizabeth McLucas</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Justice and Customs and Manager of Opposition Business in the Senate</td>
<td>Senator Joseph William Ludwig</td>
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<td>Shadow Minister for Overseas Aid and Pacific Island Affairs</td>
<td>Robert Charles Grant Sercombe MP</td>
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<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Reconciliation and the Arts</td>
<td>Peter Robert Garrett MP</td>
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<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Opposition</td>
<td>John Paul Murphy MP</td>
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<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Defence and Veterans’ Affairs</td>
<td>The Hon. Graham John Edwards MP</td>
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<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Education</td>
<td>Kirsten Fiona Livermore MP</td>
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<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Environment and Heritage</td>
<td>Jennie George MP</td>
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<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Industry, Infrastructure and Industrial Relations</td>
<td>Bernard Fernando Ripoll MP</td>
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<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Immigration</td>
<td>Ann Kathleen Corcoran MP</td>
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<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Treasury</td>
<td>Catherine Fiona King MP</td>
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<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Science and Water</td>
<td>Senator Ursula Mary Stephens</td>
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<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Northern Australia and Indigenous Affairs</td>
<td>The Hon. Warren Edward Snowdon MP</td>
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The SPEAKER (Hon. David Hawker) took the chair at 12.30 pm and read prayers.

DELEGATION REPORTS

Parliamentary Delegation to China and Mongolia

The SPEAKER (12.31 pm)—I present the report of the Australian parliamentary delegation to China and Mongolia. Both China and Mongolia are countries which have undergone very significant change in recent years. China is experiencing rapid economic growth which is leading to major challenges for the Chinese people but also offering significant opportunities for Australia. Mongolia has undergone the transformation from a one-party state with a centrally planned economy to a liberal democracy with an open market economy. These changes have been difficult for the Mongolian government and people, but progress, especially in the last five years, has been very positive. This report details the activities of the delegation and summarises discussions held during the visit. A warm welcome was extended to our delegation by the National People’s Congress in China and the State Great Hural in Mongolia. The delegation met with parliamentary leaders, ministers, senior government officials, local authorities and businesspeople. We greatly appreciated the level of access.

The visit to China took place at an important time for the relationship between our countries, coming only a week before the announcement of negotiations for a free trade agreement between Australia and China. The potential impact of an agreement and the opportunities for both countries in expanding economic ties was discussed in a range of meetings. Trade between Australia and China was worth more than $30 billion in 2004 and is continuing to grow rapidly. Economic growth averaging more than eight per cent annually over the last decade is placing great demand on China’s infrastructure. The Chinese energy market is one area which offers significant opportunities for Australia. For example, power generation has doubled in the last 10 years, with the equivalent of Australia’s total annual power output being added to the network in 2004. The delegation was pleased to discuss these and other issues with the Chinese and also welcomed the opportunity to meet representatives of Australian businesses and hear first-hand about their experiences of doing business in China.

In Mongolia, the delegation discussed the changes in its government and economy over the last 15 years. Mongolia has tackled and overcome a number of challenges in opening its economy and liberalising its political and administrative structures. However, there remains a need for capacity building in a range of areas. Australia provides a number of scholarships to Mongolian graduates, aimed at building the skills of key government agencies in areas such as public sector financial management and administration, education and employment, social welfare and the law. The value of these scholarships to Mongolia’s development was emphasised by Mongolian ministers and officials in almost every meeting. The delegation had the opportunity to meet with a group of returned scholarship holders who proudly call themselves ‘Mozzies’. Mongolia has vast mineral deposits in its southern regions, and the opportunities for Australian companies to assist with the development of those resources and the building of physical and social infrastructure are significant.

Productive exchanges took place with ministers in both countries on broader issues beyond the bilateral relationship. These included issues such as regional security and the fight against terrorism. This was an ex-
tremely successful visit which, I think, has contributed to further strengthening ties with both China and Mongolia. It was an important opportunity to improve the climate for trade and new investment between the two countries. I want to express my thanks to Chairman Wu Bangguo of the National People’s Congress in China and Chairman Nambaryn Enkhbayar of the State Great Hural in Mongolia for their hospitality.

In conclusion, I thank my fellow delegation members—former Senator Bolkus; Senator Troeth; Senator Kirk; the member for Fisher, Mr Peter Slipper; the member for McPherson, Mrs Margaret May; and the member for Cowper, Mr Luke Hartsuyker—for the cooperative spirit in which this visit was undertaken and for their enthusiastic input into making this a successful and enjoyable visit. I am sure that delegation members will agree with me when I say that we received excellent support from the Ambassador to China and Mongolia, Dr Alan Thomas, and the Australian Consul General in Shanghai, Mr Sam Gerovich, and their staff. I would also like to thank the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the Parliamentary Relations Office for their assistance with the visit. Finally, I would like to thank the delegation secretary, Richard Selth, for the work he put into making the visit such a success.

Mr SLIPPER (Fisher) (12.36 pm)—Mr Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today to support your remarks in relation to the report by the Australian parliamentary delegation to China and Mongolia. As you have indicated, the hospitality extended to the delegation in both countries was very much appreciated. I believe that the visit by the delegation to these two countries was both timely and constructive for Australia’s bilateral relationships with the People’s Republic of China and the Republic of Mongolia. The hospitality extended by the National People’s Congress and the State Great Hural of Mongolia was outstanding. In both countries, the delegation was given access to officials and ministers at a very high level. In fact, in Mongolia the delegation met the outgoing president, the incoming president and also other senior ministers.

It would be wonderful if Australia were able to have diplomatic representation in every capital of the world. No doubt the Minister for Foreign Affairs would like this to occur, but the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, like other departments, must operate within a budget. At times it is necessary for various departments to prioritise what they are able to achieve compared with what they would like to be able to achieve.

I am impressed by the quality of our diplomatic representation in Beijing. The relationship between the People’s Republic of China and Australia poses great opportunities for both countries, but it is a relationship which needs to be worked at; it needs highly competent diplomats. My observation of our personnel in Beijing is that our nation is well served by those people who have been posted to Beijing.

Following the collapse of the former Soviet Union, I gather that Australia’s diplomatic representation to Mongolia moved from the ambassador in Moscow to the ambassador in Beijing. While I do appreciate that it is not possible to be like the United Kingdom and have a full-time embassy in Ulaanbaatar, it occurs to me that, as a matter of priority, we ought to be looking at the appointment of an honorary consul to Ulaanbaatar or the allocation of a person from the Beijing embassy to be resident in Ulaanbaatar. There are great opportunities for Australia as far as trade with Mongolia is concerned, but unless we have people on the ground, strongly asserting Australia’s inter-
ests, we will not be able to capitalise on those opportunities.

There is no doubt that the embassy staff in Beijing are very busy, and it is a pity that they are not able to spend more time in Mongolia. Frankly, if I were the ambassador in Beijing, I do not think that I would be able to spare staff in Mongolia. One of the things that I would like to see occur is the government consider appointing the ambassador in Moscow to be once again Australia’s non-resident ambassador in Ulaanbaatar. Perhaps the Moscow ambassador is not as busy as the Beijing ambassador—although I am not really in a position to say whether that is the case or not. As a matter of very high priority, I think we ought to look at an honorary consul in Ulaanbaatar so that the bilateral relationship is able to be encouraged and nurtured.

Mr Speaker, time is short, so I will not reiterate the points you made, but I, like you, was impressed by the group of former Australian students called ‘Mozzies’ now in many cases percolating right to the upper reaches of the bureaucracy in Ulaanbaatar and Mongolia more generally. I see the relationship as being a fruitful one—one that we can develop and one that we are going to have to work at.

I felt honoured to be chosen as a member of the delegation to China and Mongolia. I want to congratulate you, Mr Speaker, on your leadership and also the delegation secretary on the very efficient way in which he carried out his duties.

COMMITTEES
Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Committee
Report

Mr BRUCE SCOTT (Maranoa) (12.41 pm)—On behalf of the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade I present the committee’s report of the delegation to the United States entitled Australia’s defence relations with the United States.

Ordered that the report be made a parliamentary paper.

Mr BRUCE SCOTT—The security treaty between Australia, New Zealand and the United States of America, the ANZUS treaty, is a key element supporting Australia’s national security. The treaty has operated for more than 50 years and appears to remain relevant in a strategic environment increasingly challenged by terrorism and non-state actors.

The treaty was first invoked following the September 2001 terrorist attacks on the United States. The response to these attacks has required Australia and the US to achieve unprecedented levels of interoperability, with Australian Defence Force elements from all three services operating as part of the US-led coalitions in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Despite the closeness of our relationship with the United States, the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade determined that it was important to inquire as to whether aspects of the relationship with the alliance could be improved. As a result, the committee established an inquiry into the state of Australia’s defence relationship with the United States.

To confirm elements of the evidence to the inquiry and to gain first-hand the United States perspective of military and strategic policy issues relating to Australia and the Asia-Pacific region, the parliament sent a delegation of seven members of the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade to the United States in July this year for an extensive series of inspections and briefings. This report describes the observations of the delegation. The report will in turn contribute to the final committee report into the Australian and United States relationship.
The delegation itinerary allowed members to address a broad range of strategic and defence aspects of Australia’s relationship with the US. This report describes the delegation’s observations in five broad topics. Chapter 1 discusses the delegation examination of defence interoperability drawn from meetings with the leaders of the two US regional Combatant Commands where Australian Defence Force personnel are training or conducting operations. These visits included briefings at Headquarters Pacific Command and a meeting with General John Abizaid, Commander of US Central Command.

Chapter 2 of the report discusses the delegation findings on the impact of the alliance on strategic affairs in the Asia-Pacific region. These observations are the results of meetings with two respected US strategic think tanks which provide policy advice to all elements of the US government and bureaucracy. These visits to the RAND Corporation and the Strategic Studies Institute were invaluable in gaining a US perspective of key strategic issues, such as the developing US relationship with China, India and Indonesia.

Chapter 3 describes the delegation visits to US military elements. These visits were selected to give the delegation an awareness of the scope of the US military and to introduce elements with which the ADF may in future seek to benchmark. The delegation itinerary included meetings with the leadership of the US 1st Marine Expeditionary Force, recently returned from Iraq, and the USS Bonhomme Richard—a US amphibious ship which recently returned from service in the Arabian gulf and Indonesia, where it conducted tsunami relief.

Chapter 4 of the report discusses delegation observations of three major US defence industry organisations. These visits were designed to observe progress on major Australian defence projects such as the Abrams tank and the Joint Strike Fighter, to discuss Australian industry involvement and to get a sense of the scale of the massive US defence industry.

In the last component of the visit to the US, the delegation sought to determine whether the strength and understanding of the defence relationship extends to all levels of the US government. Chapter 5 describes the perspective gained through meetings with Australian embassy staff in Washington and at the United Nations, senior US Department of Defense officials and the leaders of selected peer congressional committees. These meetings were all informative of the impact and importance of the Australia-US alliance.

Exposure to this range of issues and experiences could only be achieved as a result of a very well-orchestrated program. The delegation thanks the Australian embassy staff in Washington for developing and coordinating a first-rate program. In particular, the delegation thanks their US based escort, Lieutenant Colonel Andrew Hofman, for his patient insights into the US and its military culture. The delegation also wishes to thank the Australian Permanent Mission to the United Nations and the consulates in Hawaii and Los Angeles for their support and the benefit of their considerable experience.

Finally, it is important to report one consistent message from the extensive series of meetings and visits undertaken by the delegation. In almost every agency visited by the delegation the outstanding performance of the Australian Defence Force, alongside their alliance partners, in training and on operations was commented on favourably before any other topic of discussion. (Time expired)

Mr Edwards (Cowan) (12.46 pm)—As deputy leader of the delegation I am pleased to have the opportunity to comment on this report. It is a historic fact that Australia has enjoyed good defence relationships
with the United States of America. This trip confirmed for me that those relationships are as strong today as when they were first forged under the leadership of Australia’s great wartime Prime Minister, John Curtin. This visit reaffirmed the strength of the relationship, militarily and culturally, between our two nations. Indeed the strength of that relationship is not and has never been in doubt. The question for Australia, however, particularly in the face of our own need for strong leadership as an independent nation and the need to build strong partnerships with the countries in our own region, is how Australia can best use our relationship and influence with the United States to enhance world peace and security, and indeed to make the world a safer place.

Our visit to the United States was a full-on occasion and the delegation covered much ground and touched on many issues, which were covered in briefings. The focus of the visit was the concentration on the many visits to US defence and defence related areas of interest. However, a highlight of the visit for me was to lay a wreath at the Vietnam veterans memorial in Washington—a sacred area to Vietnam veterans, better known as ‘the wall’.

The committee visited the Raytheon Expeditionary Warfare Center, which gave us an example of the scale of the US defence industry. Raytheon is active in Australia and is represented by way of a wholly owned subsidiary company. One of the issues I was interested in was Raytheon’s positive views, indeed the US military’s positive views, on the Collins class submarines. These subs have their detractors in the media here, but in the United States they are lauded as a first-class unit. The delegation also visited Lima, home of the Joint Systems Manufacturing Centre and home of the Abrams tank. We were briefed on the long-term plans for this vehicle and were shown through the giant plant where these tanks are being remanufactured.

One of the key visits was to Lockheed Martin to be briefed on the range of issues associated with Australia’s decision—perhaps the Prime Minister’s decision would be more accurate—to invest in the F35 Joint Strike Fighter. This is a yet to be fully developed, proven or tested fighter, which represents the single largest defence procurement in Australia’s history. This is a project being carefully followed both here and in the United States.

The production of this fighter has already suffered several setbacks, including major problems with weight and performance. Indeed there is bipartisan concern in the United States congress which has led to congress threats to cut funding to the project until problems with the JSF have been resolved. Australia has received assurances that there will be minimal further delay on the development of this fighter. Concerns about the JSF have led to an emerging view in Australia that the F22 Raptor may have been a better option for Australia’s defence needs than the JSF because of its greater capacity. It remains unclear whether the US will allow the Raptor to be sold to its allies. It is certain, however, that the development of the JSF will continue to be watched with a critical eye both here and in the US. It is also clear that, just as in the US, there is bipartisan Australian political concern about the decision to purchase the JSF. These issues will be the subject of the committee’s next inquiry, which will focus on Australia’s air superiority.

In conclusion and on behalf of my colleagues in this place Steve Gibbons and in the Senate Steve Hutchins, I thank all those responsible for the organisation and logistics of this visit. I also thank the staff of the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, De-
fence and Trade for their support and, in particular, I thank Lieutenant Colonel Gus McLachlan for his work on the report and for his assistance during the visit.

One thing that was driven home to us everywhere across the United States was the immense respect that US military and political leaders have for the capacity, courage and professionalism of members of the Australian Defence Force. However, this is praise that generally leads these same leaders to ask for more. This is a request that must always be measured by Australia with caution—caution which we as a nation must always undertake when we make decisions within the framework of a very strong and sound relationship with the United States of America.

In conclusion, a delegation recently returned from Iraq, which the previous speaker, Mr Bruce Scott, and my colleague Warren Snowdon, the member for Lingiari, were privileged to be part of. I must say that the same praise that we copped in America for our troops was echoed in Iraq. (Time expired)

The SPEAKER—The time allotted for statements on this report has expired. Does the member for Maranoa wish to move a motion in connection with the report to enable it to be debated on a future occasion?

Mr BRUCE SCOTT (Maranoa) (12.52 pm)—I move:

That the House take note of the report.

The SPEAKER—In accordance with standing order 39, the debate is adjourned. The resumption of the debate will be made an order of the day for the next sitting.

TELEMARKETING (PROTECTION OF PRIVACY RIGHTS OF RESIDENTIAL TELEPHONE SUBSCRIBERS) BILL 2005

First Reading

Bill presented by Ms Burke.

Ms BURKE (Chisholm) (12.52 pm)—The Telemarketing (Protection of Privacy Rights of Residential Telephone Subscribers) Bill 2005, to protect residential telephone subscribers’ rights to avoid receiving telephone solicitations to which they object, is seconded by the member for Cowan, Graham Edwards. This bill is in response to the anger and frustration of Australians who are sick of being harassed in their own homes by telemarketers. The bill establishes a national ‘do not call’ list, allowing people to opt out of receiving unwanted telemarketing calls. It bans telemarketers from calling people on public holidays and Sundays and on any other day between midnight and 9 am or 8 pm and midnight. And it sets out a penalty system that would result in individuals or companies that breached the law being issued with hefty fines. This bill also protects Australians from receiving unwanted calls from overseas. If an Australian corporation engages an overseas call centre to solicit on its behalf, the Australian company is liable for any breach.

There is a growing surge of resentment as people realise there is nothing they can do to protect their own privacy, not even in their own homes, and there is a sense of bewilderment that the federal government will not act. Yesterday the Minister for Communications, Information Technology and the Arts released a ‘do not call’ list discussion paper. The people of Australia do not want a discussion paper; they want action. If the government can rush through industrial relations legislation which no-one is asking for, and if it can rush through the sale of Telstra which
no-one is asking for, why release a discussion paper? Why not support a bill before the House today that people are clamouring for?

While my bill puts the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission in charge of the register, the government has proposed that the Australian Communications and Media Authority be responsible for its administration. I would support any government amendment to reconcile these differences because, for the sake of people’s sanity, we need to get this register implemented as soon as possible. Thousands of people have contacted me in support of my campaign. They are crying out for help. Unsolicited calls are the biggest source of complaints to the New South Wales Office of Fair Trading, and in Victoria and South Australia complaints have surged. Last year the average Australian received 53 telemarketing calls per week. That is a total of 1.065 billion calls a year, not including the millions of calls coming from overseas call centres in countries such as India and Singapore. This means that Australians are spending around half an hour each week fielding telemarketing calls. Thanks to telemarketers, there are now in effect only 364 days in a year for each individual.

Is it any wonder that people are fed up with these calls? They are annoying, invasive and often quite intimidating. They affect all sectors of our community. I think most families will know what I am talking about when I mention the witching hour. You are trying to cook the dinner, bath the kids and get them to bed, only to have the phone ring with the wonderful line: ‘Good evening, Mrs Burke’—and I know someone is not ringing me for a friendly chat when they use that title—’would you like to buy something?’ Families have so little time together as it is that these precious moments must be protected. For anyone working from home these calls are also a huge distraction, and seniors, particularly those who are physically frail or have dementia, find these calls extremely disturbing. As a result, people are subscribing to private services or opting for silent numbers. But people should not have to pay to protect their privacy; the government should protect it for them. State legislation cannot be enforced against interstate or overseas telemarketers, and the Australian Direct Marketing Association’s ‘do not call’ register only applies to 500 members.

People ask me, ‘Why hasn’t the federal government done anything?’ There is no logical reason. As the government has legislated against spam, why not legislate against telemarketing? In 2004, the then communications minister dismissed Labor’s policy for a national ‘do not call’ list based on the US model as ‘populist’, questioning whether it would work here. It has worked in the US, and it is a success, with more than 100 million households registered. It will work in Australia. His claim that a list could cost hundreds of thousands of jobs was a furphy, as the evidence from the US shows. An article in the Advertising Age said:

... early indications are that the industry is evolving, rather than facing extinction: many telemarketers appear to have survived by broadening their businesses.

And according to Manpower Inc.:

The ‘do not call’ registry didn’t decrease the demand for personnel; it just shifted the work employees had to do.

Just as there is more than one way to skin a cat, there is more than one way to sell a mobile phone plan. Companies must adopt marketing methods that do not invade the privacy of consumers. Of course, when establishing the list it may be necessary to close off any loopholes—for instance, making caller ID mandatory for direct marketers. Privacy should be a right, not a privilege. People should have the right to protect their family time and say no to telemarketers. The Howard government today has an opportu-
nity to give the community what it wants: not a discussion paper but a way to stop these annoying telemarketing calls now—not next year or the year after that but now. (Time expired)

Bill read a first time.

The SPEAKER—In accordance with standing order 41, the second reading will be made an order of the day for the next sitting.

CHARTER OF BUDGET HONESTY AMENDMENT BILL 2005

First Reading

Bill presented by Mr Tanner.

Mr TANNER (Melbourne) (12.57 pm)—In 1998 the government introduced the Charter of Budget Honesty with, amongst other things, provisions to provide a facility for both government and opposition to have election promises costed by the departments of Treasury and Finance and Administration during an election campaign. It was alleged at the time that this legislation would ensure that voters at an election would always be able to give genuine consideration to the costs of the various promises put forward by the political parties that chose to participate in the scheme. In practice, the Charter of Budget Honesty has been ruthlessly manipulated and rigged against the interests of the opposition, and the purpose of this legislation that I am introducing today is to amend that legislation in order to make it much fairer and more transparent. It does so in three ways. Firstly, it extends to 12 months the period over which either government or opposition can obtain costings of their policies from Treasury and Finance prior to an election, rather than only during an election period, as is currently the case. Secondly, it enables the opposition to deal directly with the secretaries of the departments of Treasury and Finance and Administration rather than dealing through the government, as it has to at present. Thirdly, it imposes a confidentiality requirement on the two departmental secretaries in order to ensure that it is abundantly clear that their dealings with the opposition are not to be disclosed to the government.

The Charter of Budget Honesty is effectively rigged against the opposition and has been designed by the government to favour its own political interests. The fact that access is available only during an election period means that in the remaining two years and 11 months of a normal electoral cycle the government has access to Treasury and Finance for the costing of any proposals that it seeks to have costed, whereas the opposition has no such access. In fact when the opposition last year, outside the election campaign period, requested that the government cost some opposition proposals with respect to savings regarding the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme the government refused to do so. The existing arrangements also mean that data that is not disclosed to the public or to the opposition is used for costing purposes and assumptions are used for costing purposes by the two departments that are not disclosed to the government. It also means that the government is able to effectively get its election policies costed and any wrinkles or problems with them ironed out well in advance of an election campaign.

The government now complains that the opposition are unhappy when it, the government, initiates a costing of an opposition promise and say that, because we do that, therefore we should not have any right to a broader window of opportunity to get costing of our promises. Of course, what it is referring to is when the government unilaterally costs opposition commitments, as it sought to do in 1998 when it asked Treasury and Finance to cost the implications of following through from votes by Labor in the Senate and assuming that, because Labor voted against a particular piece of legislation, it
was therefore promising to repeal that legislation and therefore the cost implications of that needed to be taken into account. Obviously, that is not an honest and fair costing process, and it is completely duplicitous of the government to claim that the opposition do have access to costing outside the election period as a result.

The government itself is not forced to disclose vital information by the existing arrangements. During the election campaign the government did not disclose the extraordinary blow-out in the cost of the Medicare safety net until it was forced to do so as a result of the process of costing Labor’s Medicare Gold policy. We need a genuine, independent costing process. In other English-speaking democracies there are a variety of arrangements that deal with this—the Congressional Budget Office in the United States, the Institute for Fiscal Studies in the UK and a parliamentary committee in New Zealand. The proposal that I am putting before the parliament today is a relatively limited one designed to put the ball back in the government’s court and to see whether it is fair dinkum about genuine disclosure and genuine transparency of costing of political promises. It does not go to some of the broader questions that I think are worth debating, but it does substantially reform the existing system.

We need comprehensive reform of the Charter of Budget Honesty to ensure that there is genuine public scrutiny of all promises on equal terms, and we need broader reform of the budget papers and financial disclosure and transparency in the Commonwealth parliament generally. That is why I have launched Operation Sunlight, a process of widespread consultation of appropriate experts in order to determine a strategy for reforming presentation of financial information in the budget papers. Reforming the Charter of Budget Honesty is the first step. I commend the bill to the House. (Time expired)

Bill read a first time.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. IR Causley)—In accordance with standing order 41, the second reading will be made an order of the day for the next sitting.

PRIVATE MEMBERS’ BUSINESS

Laos

Mr SLIPPER (Fisher) (1.03 pm)—by leave—On behalf of the honourable member for Herbert, who is unable to be here I understand because of family circumstances, I move:

That this House:
(1) acknowledges that the Lao PDR suffered the heaviest bombing that the world has ever known and remains today the most heavily contaminated country in the world;
(2) views with concern that 30 years after the Indo-China war the effects of unexploded ordinance (UXO) are still a serious problem, two thirds of Laos is affected with ten out of eighteen provinces remaining severely contaminated;
(3) is alarmed that there has been a substantial increase in civilian UXO casualties, particularly children, because population growth is increasing pressure to farm more land;
(4) notes that while the world community is well aware of landmines, there is little international understanding of the problems of UXO; and
(5) urges the Australian Government to continue to increase financial support for clearance efforts.

It would be interesting to see how residents of developed Western nations such as Australia would react if they were to be uprooted and transplanted into a life in Laos. In particular, it would be interesting to see how they would cope with the knowledge that much of their country, much of their land that they have been forced to farm, may ac-
actually conceal a hidden menace—an unexploded munitions shell. Imagine being accompanied by the constant thought in your mind to watch where you step and the constant thought that the next reckless step could prove fatal. Imagine how parents feel when their children go out to play or go to school. This situation in Laos is a reality for many citizens living in rural areas.

The UXO problem is the result of some of the heaviest bombing ever experienced during war. In the period between 1964 and 1973, during the Indochina war, Laos was targeted by an unimaginable number of cluster bombs. Figures put the quantity at some two million tonnes. It is known today that up to one-third of those bombs did not explode on impact as planned. As a result of that conflict, Laos today has the unenviable title of the most heavily bombed country per capita in the world. Today, much of the landscape remains contaminated with these hidden killers. Estimates range from half a million to three million UXOs still scattered around the country. Many of these munitions are high powered and unstable. The Lao National Unexploded Ordnance Program, UXO Lao, reports:

During the first four years after the war, an average number of 3 accidents occurred per day. That number has now dropped to an average of 240 accidents per year.

Officially, 11,000 people have been killed due to explosions of these leftover bombs since hostilities ceased in 1973. However, the United Nations Development Program suggests, as a result of problems with reporting and collating statistics and data in this Third World country, the actual number of deaths and injury from UXOs may be more than reported. Some suggest the actual number may be double the official figure, while another UN report claims that some provinces are actually reporting just one in 10 actual deaths caused by UXO accidents.

There is further evidence that there has more recently been a resurgence in the number of casualties caused by this widespread contamination. The United Nations Development Program highlights the emergence of further complications from the past bombings as the Lao people try to come to grips with urban expansion and the desperate need to make a living, sometimes in any way possible. An August 2004 media release by the UNDP stated:

In recent years, increasing population pressure has also fuelled accident rates from UXO, as more people are forced to farm land that is contaminated by unexploded bombs and mines, but according to UNDP, the underlying cause of most UXO accidents in Laos is poverty. Laos is one of the poorest countries in Asia, so despite only receiving a few cents a kilo from war metal scrap, many people are prepared to risk the potentially tragic results of scavenging war scrap.

This is an extremely heartbreaking problem, and sadly it has become an uncomfortable fact of life for residents of that country. Around 66 per cent of the country has been affected by UXO contamination: 10 out of 18 provinces are severely contaminated. The Lao People’s Democratic Republic today has the lowest per capita income in East Asia. While I certainly admire the landscape of Laos, its citizens and their customs, I feel deeply for these people who are trying to come to grips with this problem, which is not of their doing and is incredibly debilitating to ordinary, everyday life, and it will be extremely expensive to fix.

It is important that people are able to go about their daily lives without fear of being blown up by UXOs. I am pleased that a number of colleagues are joining with me in supporting the honourable member for Herbert’s motion, which I have moved, no doubt to express similar sentiments and sympathies for the people of Laos who confront this menace and who will confront this menace
for quite some considerable time. (Time expired)

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

Mr QUICK (Franklin) (1.08 pm)—I second the motion. Laos is a country long-forgotten by most of the world. I along with two other members of this House, the member for Fisher and the member for Herbert, and one senator had the pleasure of visiting this beautiful country in September as an official observer at an ASEAN conference. Our party had the opportunity to visit not only Vientiane but also the jewel of Indochina: the World Heritage listed city of Luang Prabang. We journeyed by traditional boat for several hours up the mighty Mekong River and saw first-hand many of the villages that front this great waterway.

However, in this peaceful, landlocked country a daily tragedy unfolds across its length and breadth. The Vietnam War has been confined to the pages of our history books and yet in Laos the citizens are daily facing a reminder of the USA's determination all those years ago to defeat the North Vietnamese forces. From 1964 to 1973 more than 580,000 bombing missions were launched over Laos by the US Air Force in a war that most of the Western world did not know anything about. These 580,000 bombing missions were equal to one bombing mission every eight minutes around the clock for nine full years. This intensive bombing campaign has left the landscape of Laos littered with countless craters even to this day. The most widely used were antipersonnel cluster bombs filled with 670 bomblets that were intended to explode on or shortly after impact. These bomblets, about the size of a tennis ball, contain 250 steel pellets which were meant to fire in a two- to four-metre radius when detonated; thus crippling, but not killing, enemy soldiers. The theory was that an injured soldier cost the enemy more than a dead one—American technology at its worst.

UXOs have had a disastrous effect on the development of Laos and on its people. Tens of thousands of these ordinances failed to explode. They sank into soft mud or rice paddies only to detonate many years later when accidentally struck by farmers going about their daily tasks, by children playing in the fields or in the neighboring villages or by buffaloes wandering around the farmland. The people most directly affected by these UXOs are those living in rural and remote regions of Laos, as I said, going about their daily lives. They face the danger and potential loss of life and limb on a daily basis through clearing the land for cultivation, digging foundations to extend the local school or perhaps to erect a new medical clinic, or simply doing something as ordinary as collecting firewood. Between 1973 and 1999, 10,649 UXO related accidents happened in Laos and they continue at a rate of over 200 a year. Half the victims die almost immediately and those who survive suffer loss of limbs, blindness, paralysis and deafness.

Why are we raising this issue in the House? Firstly, to alert Australians of all walks of life to this tragic circumstance and, secondly, to congratulate the government of Australia and its agencies on their financial commitment to assisting the Lao government and their officials in eradicating this scourge. Whilst in Vientiane our party had the pleasure of meeting with workers and officials from the many international NGOs who are making a real difference in Laos, and to them I pay great credit. They are working on national programs in landmine and UXO clearance, on a nationwide program to assist schoolchildren, their families and ethnic communities in UXO safety awareness and on a program aimed at building Lao capacity
to establish and manage UXO clearance. I congratulate all the countries involved in the UXO clearance program for their financial and logistical support.

Finally, I urge the US government to boost its contribution. As the country responsible totally for this tragedy, to only contribute $2.3 million really beggars belief.

Mr FORREST (Mallee) (1.13 pm)—I am pleased to support this motion on Laos of the member for Herbert. I am disappointed he is not here, but I am quite willing to stand in his stead and speak on his behalf. The motion states:

That this House:

(1) acknowledges that the Lao PDR suffered the heaviest bombing that the world has ever known and remains today the most heavily contaminated country in the world ...

The member for Fisher has discussed that issue. Secondly, the motion states that this House:

(2) views with concern that 30 years after the Indo-China war the effects of unexploded ordinance (UXO) are still a serious problem, two thirds of Laos is affected with ten out of eighteen provinces remaining severely contaminated ...

The member for Franklin has addressed that issue. The third plank of the member for Herbert’s motion says that this House:

(3) is alarmed that there has been a substantial increase in civilian UXO casualties, particularly children, because population growth is increasing pressure to farm more land ...

On that point it is worth noting that Laos lacks an effective data collection system for unexploded ordnance accidents and casualties. What information is available is somewhat scarce and unreliable, but one survey has concluded that 9,473 people suffered UXO accidents from 1973 to 1996 and another 1,171 people suffered landmine accidents, resulting in a combined total of 10,644 victims. These are alarming figures and, given the injuries sustained by the people concerned, I am delighted that Australia has punched above its weight and made a contribution not just to this issue but also to the clearing of landmines, which is a slightly separate issue but which certainly has a similar impact on the populace of South-East Asian countries.

The fourth point of the motion of the member for Herbert asks that this House notes that, while the world community is aware of landmines, there is little international understanding of the problems of unexploded ordnance. Members making contributions to the discussion today should recognise that Australia has attempted to address this issue. We have heard a lot about the issue of landmines and it has had a very high profile over the years, supported by some very famous international figures. But this issue of unexploded ordnance is slightly different. Even though the record of the location of landmines is uncertain, landmines tend to be located in fairly typical places, so it is a lot easier to locate and disarm them to protect the populace. But unexploded ordnance, which the member for Franklin has alerted us to, are indiscriminate. They were called small cluster bombies. They are located in the undergrowth and places where children might play, and they are in agricultural paddocks and farmland—they are located indiscriminately.

The latest increase in fatalities and casualties from unexploded ordnance has been brought about by an interest of the hardpressed people of Laos in recovering metal to supplement their income. They are taking enormous risks by not completely understanding what the piece of metal they have discovered is. Australia can help with programs like that to educate the populace and make them aware that metal indiscriminately discovered in the jungles and paddocks can
be dangerous unexploded ordnance. I am delighted to see that Australia will increase its UXO assistance allowance by an average of $A1.5 million annually, commencing this financial year. Future assistance will include integrated support for clearance awareness activities and survivor assistance. It makes me immensely proud to stand here and as an Australian see us punching above our weight in that regard. Of course, there is still much to be done and I support the call by the member for Franklin for the United States—which bears so much responsibility for this unexploded ordnance—to make its contribution. (Time expired)

Mr RIPOLL (Oxley) (1.18 pm)—I am pleased and honoured to speak on the motion about unexploded ordnance in Laos, moved by the member for Fisher, and on what the Australian government and the rest of the world are doing to fix and eradicate this grave problem in the country of Laos. I will start by congratulating the Lao Australians, who have made such a huge contribution to this country and who have made Australia their home. In particular, I want to put on the record my thanks to one Lao activist in my local community. He is a social worker and somebody of great note in my local community who has done a great job in helping Australians and also Lao people in the local area. His name is Luck Choummanivong. He is a great man who has done a lot of work, and I am very proud to have helped him in activities in my local community.

While great things are being done here, not all is well in the country of Laos. There are many problems with their economy, with trying to get people out of poverty and, in particular, with unexploded ordnance and landmines. In fact, Laos has a horrible history in terms of what has been done to it. From 1965 to 1974 more than three million tonnes of bombs were dropped on Laos. Today unexploded ordnance still affects more than half the country’s total area and each year it kills and injures hundreds of people. Most sadly, these people are often children and they have no understanding of what these things are—these bombs, landmines and unexploded ordnance—and they have no way of protecting themselves from them.

I also want to congratulate the honourable member for Herbert, Peter Lindsay, for putting this issue on the agenda and for helping to make this a priority for government. I believe government ought to do all that it can and I am happy to say the government is moving in a positive direction, with an announcement in July this year of an extra $75 million to be spent over the next five years to support the clearing of landmines and unexploded ordnance. It is incumbent on Australia, with Australians having fought alongside the Lao in that region, to meet its responsibility to the nation and contribute as much as it can to the rebuilding and to the clearing of landmines and unexploded ordnance. I also want to echo the words of the member for Franklin that the United States of America also has a huge responsibility. I agree with that; I think that the United States should do everything it can to maximise the efforts taken and amount of money spent in Laos to rid it of devastating unexploded ordnance and landmines.

If nothing is done and the current programs are not increased, we have it on advice that it will take a further 900 years to clear the country of its unexploded ordnance—something which I think is incomprehensible and unacceptable in today’s terms. The United States, Australia and a number of other countries should make the biggest commitment possible to clear those bombs, landmines and unexploded ordnance. It is a terrible situation for a country that not only struggles, as does Laos, to deal with its own economy and with people living at subsistence levels—the economy is mostly based
around agriculture—but also is trying to increase its own capacity to deal with these unexploded ordnance. As I said earlier, it is incumbent on Australia to be more proactive in this area.

While we in this country enjoy safety and economic growth, there are many countries around Indochina and South-East Asia which do not enjoy that safety in the same way that we do. They do not have the capacity, either, to deal with the results or the outcomes. You can imagine a young child, helping a family by ploughing the fields or tilling the soil, stepping on a landmine or an unexploded ordnance and losing a limb. That is often what happens in these cases—if the person is not killed. There are no capacities or systems, as there are in this country, to deal with that. Those injured often cannot work or contribute to their families. It is much deeper and much more profound to lose a limb or be affected in some way for the rest of your life in Laos than it is to be affected in that way here in Australia. Those affected do not have the same welfare system, support or help that we have in this country. So I again want to congratulate the member for Herbert for putting this on the record.

Mr FAWCETT (Wakefield) (1.23 pm)—Action to date in relation to UXOs has largely focused on landmines, leading to action to have a worldwide ban on landmines. Antipersonnel mines, which were first used on a large scale in World War II, have been used in many conflicts, including in Vietnam, Korea and the first Gulf War. Modern warfare, increasingly against non-state actors and involving higher degrees of mobility and less entrenched defensive positions, has changed the weight of opinion in government and military circles about the strategic and tactical efficacy of landmines. The Ottawa convention in particular has led to far fewer countries producing or using them. Hopefully this means that they will be less of an issue in the future in terms of the remaining legacy of UXO issues.

An incident on the weekend involving our near neighbour Papua New Guinea highlighted that UXOs take in far more than landmines. A man there was killed and others were injured when a World War II bomb went off during a brush burn-off on Bougainville. In Laos there were over half a million bombing raids during the South-East Asian conflict, with some two million tonnes of ordnance being dropped. In addition to the aerial-delivered ordnance, there are artillery shells, mortar rounds, rockets, grenades and other devices which are still present as an UXO hazard. Estimates are that some 30 per cent of ordnance which was delivered did not actually detonate—hence the legacy risk.

Previous speakers have told of the legacy of UXOs and the ongoing horror of civilian casualties. I support their comments, and I too commend the Australian government on its leading role in the Ottawa convention and its increasing role in the provision of education and practical clearance support to the community in Laos. Some $107 million has been spent since 1996, exceeding the pledge of $100 million. As previous speakers have noted, there has been an increased pledge which will allow the average amount of Australian aid to increase from $10 million to $15 million over the next five-year period. This is going to make a real difference to people in Laos and hopefully reduce the toll which, as recently as 2003-04, included 41 people killed and 76 people injured.

I wish to look at this issue from a slightly different perspective. Military action, while it should be a last option for the Australian government, must remain a viable response option. But once we commit troops we have a duty of care to ensure that the weapon systems we employ, including the munitions, are effective in bringing about the national,
strategic and tactical effects that are desired but also in minimising post-conflict issues such as UXO contamination. Part of the ability to deploy and maintain a viable combat force is the ability to supply and maintain a range of support measures, including aerial fire support and indirect fire support. Many aspects of our history bear testimony to the efficacy of this. In particular, we celebrate the victory that Australians had at the Battle of Long Tan—this was partly because of the courage of the troops in D company but largely because of the effectiveness of the indirect fire support that came from the Nui Dat fire support base.

If we are going to deploy troops, we need to make sure that we have ordnance—whether it is ordnance for small arms, crew served weapons or indirect fire support such as artillery or aerially delivered ordnance—which is going to be effective in supporting our troops and achieving the objectives. We also need to ensure that it will have a far greater success than the 70 per cent success rate we saw during the South-East Asian conflict. To achieve this, we require a continued investment in enabling capabilities for defence such as research, testing and evaluation, and training. These are often the hidden elements of a defence capability.

We often look at the front-line capability and the units which are delivering capability, and in order to achieve efficiencies in expenditure we sometimes cut costs as regards the enabling capabilities in terms of the number of people, training or equipment. With respect to ordnance, there are some particularly important areas such as ordnance regulation, testing and evaluation, and training, which the Australian government, the Australian people and our defence organisations need to continue to recognise.

So whether it be through the Ordnance Safety Group, the Joint Ammunition Logistics Organisation or some of the test and evaluation organisations—such as the Aircraft Research and Development Unit or the Aircraft Stores Compatibility Engineering Agency, which look at integrating overseas procured munitions to make sure that they are effective in the way that we use them, that they are stored safely and delivered safely and that they not only work effectively and safely to support our ground forces but also do not remain as a legacy—ongoing investment in these capabilities is essential. The government, DMO and the defence forces must continue to recognise the necessity of investing in this enabling infrastructure of defence such that there is indigenous capability to integrate new ordnance into our legacy weapons systems. Failure to do this will not only result in decreased operational efficiency but also cause a legacy such as UXOs. 

Mr EDWARDS (Cowan) (1.28 pm)—I am pleased to support the motion moved by the member for Fisher. I congratulate the mover on bringing it forward. I also compliment previous speakers on the motion for their contributions to this debate. As the member for Franklin pointed out, the UXO problem in Laos resulted from the carpet bombing which was part of the whole unfortunate war in Vietnam. There was carpet bombing, where bombs were dropped by the thousands, some of them inefficient and not exploding immediately and some of them designed not to explode immediately but to hang in bushes or shrubbery where they could act as an ongoing device to wound soldiers who might come through the areas after bombs had been dropped.

Of course, ordnance has no life expectancy. Much of the ordnance that has been dropped, including that dropped as late as the First World War, still has a life today. It is not uncommon to hear of unexploded ordnance turning up in France. The example was given
just a few minutes ago of New Guinea, and we still see unexploded ordnance and anti-tank mines coming to the surface in Egypt. Tragically, the people most affected by unexploded ordnance or landmines—and, while the focus of this motion is on Laos, it is a horrific situation which is occurring in many countries torn by war and conflict, both presently and in the past, in other parts of the world—are kids, civilians, mums and dads. The victims are just going about the business of making a living, working in the bushes, working in the fields or working in the jungles, trying to sustain their lives. Often it is kids, attracted to the shapes or colours of unexploded ordnance, who might attempt to play with them or who inadvertently brush them or stand on them.

The civilians and soldiers who come into contact with ordnance cannot be compared. Soldiers, when they are operating in a theatre of war, are trained. They know how to deal with these UXOs or landmines or, if they do not, they have close support from experts who do. In the event that a soldier is wounded, generally they have colleagues there to look after them, and soldiers have very quick access to field hospitals or places they can be evacuated to where they will receive wonderful medical support. Unfortunately for civilians—particularly kids or people working in the bush, the fields or the jungles by themselves—if they explode these devices, often they are not found for a long time and they die horrifyingly agonising, lonely deaths. Or, if they do survive, they survive in such a way as to be physically impaired, usually in countries where there is no safety net, where there is no ongoing medical support and often where there is very little access to prostheses.

The other point about UXOs, or landmines, is that they deny safe access to crucial areas required for agriculture—required not just by individuals but by some of the poorest nations in the world to be able to develop, to cultivate and to help feed themselves. For that reason alone, these nations are in need of great support from countries like Australia. I must say that I compliment the Australian government on their increased support and on the role that they have played in trying to rid the world of landmines. But there is an immense amount of work that needs to be done, and it is an immense amount of work that needs to be shared by all free countries in aid of these poorer nations. (Time expired)

Mr LAMING (Bowman) (1.33 pm)—I find myself following excellent contributions from speakers on both sides of this chamber on the motion moved by the member for Fisher, so I think I could only summarise by pointing to, firstly, the enormous success so far of the Ottawa convention, which has already significantly reduced the number of nations producing, trading and using landmines. Secondly, I will focus, as the member for Herbert has done, on the wonderful work being done by external agencies and local Lao de-miners in ridding that country of nearly two million tonnes of unexploded ordnance from previous hostilities. Landmines are still a very attractive option for many non-state players and smaller nations and it will always be a strategic option for those that seek to gain some advantage over larger and better organised forces, so the issue of landmines will remain.

There are mines scattered around the countryside, predominantly in the poorer areas of the world—in particular, I mention Afghanistan, Burma, Cambodia, Sri Lanka, Iraq, Jordan, Angola and Mozambique, and obviously Laos as well, to name just a few. The shrapnel that is left behind by other military activity makes the clearing of landmines even more difficult and more testing, so to be training local people in the clearing of landmines will often involve small teams of highly dedicated people working, and many
of these workers have high levels of motivation. They are not always literate and they are not always technical or military folk, but they dedicate their lives and take on extraordinary dangers in operating in some of these environments.

Just try to imagine clearing in some of the toughest climatic conditions and working six to eight hours a day simply listening for a small emission from your landmine clearing detector, working with very basic gear and basic eye protection. It is good to see some additional work being done in technological advances, such as mine-detecting dogs and better computer support, to ensure that those who do dedicate their lives and their time to clearing their own countries can do it as safely as possible. It is good to know that some of the teams that are operating in Laos at the moment can report that so far there have been no injuries amongst those who have been clearing unexploded ordnance. The ordnance, of course, is more than just landmines; it includes all of the unexploded mortars and bombs, as has been alluded to previously.

I would like to correct one statement from the member for Franklin, who said that the United States’s contribution to clearing landmines and unexploded ordnance in Laos is only $2.6 million. The total US contribution to clearing landmines is closer to $700 million. In South-East Asia, $83 million has been spent since 1996. So I am not quite sure where the figure of $2.6 million comes from; it may well be just for one single program. It is also important to remember that it is crops, it is livestock and it is access to fuel and water—all of these things are inhibited. The absence of a safe environment in which you can bring up a family in some of the poorest parts of the world, where almost the entire day revolves around ensuring sustenance and a future for the family, makes clearing this ordnance an absolute priority.

Quite often the procedure in these areas will be to prioritise exactly what needs to be cleared. First it will be the roads into villages, then it will be the villages themselves. Many of these landmines are actually dug up and removed and replaced in different locations, meaning that the original maps that are available to those people who are clearing the landmines are completely unreliable. Obviously these areas are cleared by one square metre at a time. In Laos, for instance, 41 million square metres have been cleared; in Thailand, 6½ million square metres have been cleared; and of course we are all very familiar with the significant Australian efforts in Cambodia where 122 million square metres have been painstakingly cleared.

It is also worth remembering that many of these areas are areas of conflict. Much of the de-mining work is actually done while there is insecurity for the landmine clearers themselves, so it is absolutely imperative for these groups to negotiate with both sides of the conflict and to gain clearance to operate. They have to ensure that the areas that they are clearing are not providing some strategic advantage for one side of the conflict over the other or they risk being drawn into it, which would also be a terrible outcome.

Australia has a long and distinguished career in clearing landmines. The technical skills of our armed forces have been put to use in a number of spheres. I can speak personally of the work undertaken in Pakistan and of the efforts of Australia’s military to send highly trained Afghan de-miners into the northern areas of Afghanistan, making a significant economic contribution to that country. I support the motion. (Time expired)

Mr BOWEN (Prospect) (1.38 pm)—I am pleased to support the motion and I congratulate the honourable member for Herbert on playing a role in increasing public awareness of this issue. As we debate the problems fac-
ing this nation it is worth remembering that, as important and as serious as those problems are, many other nations not far from us are facing more challenging issues and we need to do more to support them. In the Indochina War of 1964 to 1973, 500,000 bombing missions were launched over Laos. This translates to over 80 million cluster bombs being dropped on this comparatively small nation. AusAID estimates that that is equivalent to one plane load of bombs being dropped on Laos every eight minutes around the clock for a full nine years.

It is estimated that 30 per cent of the bombs dropped on Laos simply did not explode. Fifty per cent of the land useable for agriculture in Laos is contaminated with unexploded ordnance. When you consider that more than 50 per cent of Laos’s national output is agriculture, this brings into focus what a serious problem it is for that nation. The Australian government travel advisory for Laos warns that unexploded ordnance is prevalent and that leaving established walking trails can be very dangerous, as the areas that suffer from unexploded ordnance are usually unmarked. That is a very chilling warning indeed.

As the motion notes, increases in population and economic pressure mean that more land is farmed. Of course, in a country of great poverty there is a great temptation for people to do something stupid and attempt to disengage an unexploded ordnance in order to take the metal to a scrap metal merchant for a small return, but that small return can often mean the difference between eating and not eating. Of course, in any nation or in any culture, the innate curiosity of children comes into play. This means that many children who are playing or going about their business, as their curiosity takes them to explore the land around them, have their lives cut short.

Between 1973 and 1996, 3,301 children were killed or injured by unexploded bombs. These little lives must be included in the calculation of the death toll of the Indochina War. It is estimated that there are 150 casualties a year in Laos from explosions of unexploded ordnance. Most worrying is that this number is not falling, it is increasing. It would be wrong to leave the impression that nothing is being done about this issue. UXO Lao was established in 1995 with the assistance of the United Nations Development Program. Between 1996 and 2003, UXO Lao cleared 43.96 million square metres of land of unexploded ordnance. However, in 2002 UXO Lao was forced to halve the number of its employees due to financial pressure. That number of employees has now returned to its pre 2002 levels, but I would submit that this is nothing to be rejoicing about. It would be better if, in 2005, we were celebrating much higher staffing and financing levels than those in 2002, not levels that were simply recovering to pre 2002 levels.

I recognise, as the honourable member for Bowman has, the Australian contribution to the clearing of unexploded ordnance, in particular the role played by AusAID, with the assistance of UNICEF. As this motion mentions, more can always be done. Laos is a nation in our region, South-East Asia, and many Laotian refugees have made their home in Australia, many in my electorate and the electorate of my honourable friend the member for Fowler.

Laos is one of the poorest countries in Asia. Its living standards are often regarded as being closer to the living standards of sub-Saharan Africa than its Asian neighbours. That makes this issue even more important. The poverty of people living in rural areas in Laos forces them to farm more and more land just to make a living, land which is contaminated with the most deadly of things—an unexploded bomb. Also, as the honour-
able member for Cowan mentioned, the poverty of these people means that they often do not receive adequate medical or first aid attention, which makes their injuries so much more horrific. The government, in adopting the spirit and the words mentioned in the motion of the honourable member for Herbert, could only do more to strengthen the relationship between the Laotian people and the Australian people and indeed to assist a country in great need.

Mr LAMING (Bowman) (1.43 pm)—by leave—I support the previous speakers and note the enormous number of bombing missions that were carried out over parts of Indochina and, in particular, Laos between 1964 and 1973. Almost one half of the entire nation of Laos is now affected by unexploded ordnance. The figures are striking—2,800 villages, or one in every four villages, contaminated by unexploded ordnance. That is obviously preventing the planting of crops, as I have already alluded to, which makes it extraordinarily difficult for some of the poorest parts of Laos to have even the most basic of subsistence economies. In Laos, donor funding to remove as much unexploded ordnance as possible has averaged around $4 million to $5 million per year. Australia makes a significant contribution to that. Our contribution has been around $10 million globally and it has now increased to around $15 million per year, with about a tenth of all Australia’s overseas de-mining work done in Laos.

The SPEAKER—Order! It being 1.45 pm, the debate is interrupted in accordance with standing order 43. The debate is adjourned and the resumption of the debate will be made an order of the day for the next sitting. The honourable member for Bowman will have leave to continue his remarks when the debate is resumed.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Indonesia: Terrorist Attacks

Mrs IRWIN (Fowler) (1.45 pm)—In the recent break in sittings, I was privileged to participate in the IPU conference in Geneva and the bilateral visit to Singapore. I would like to mention one highlight of the visit to Singapore which gave me and my fellow delegates—the members for Pearce, Riverina and Canberra—the opportunity to visit two victims of the recent Bali bombings in their Singapore hospital. Paul and Penny Anicich were evacuated to Singapore for treatment, and I am pleased to report that both are in good spirits, despite their terrible injuries. Penny is now out of hospital but is staying on in Singapore to be with her beloved husband. Paul is now out of intensive care and has begun the long process of recovery. Paul sees his experience like a survivor of an avalanche, as the beginning of a new life, and looks forward to returning to his law practice in Newcastle. Penny and Paul express their thanks to the staff of Mount Elizabeth Hospital and their special thanks to the member for Newcastle and the member for Paterson for their assistance. They hope to be home with their friends and family in Newcastle for Christmas. I am sure that all members will join me to wish Paul and Penny Anicich a speedy and full recovery and return to Australia.

People’s Drug Summit 2005

Mrs DRAPER (Makin) (1.46 pm)—I rise to talk about the People’s Drug Summit 2005, which was held last Saturday and Sunday. It was organised by Nick Xenophon MLC and Mr Paul Madden of Integrated Community Solutions. Part of the program of the drug summit included presentations by representatives from the Mount Theo Program in the Northern Territory on their stunning success in reducing petrol sniffing and substance abuse amongst young Indigenous
Australians; Professor Gary Hulse from the University of Western Australia on the clinical efficacy of sustained release naltrexone treatments; Craig Thompson, a magistrate from New South Wales and a member for six years of the Australian National Council on Drugs; Anne Bressington, of whom many South Australian MPs would know, from Drugbeat in South Australia on her ground-breaking abstinence based treatment programs; Dr George O’Neil from the Fresh Start Recovery Program WA about alternative treatments and rehabilitation; and Dr Stuart Reece from Queensland on the neurobiology of addiction on the brain. We also had a presentation on Sweden’s dramatically different approach to drug rehabilitation and the startling impact on drug use, particularly amongst young people in that country. (Time expired)

Vietnam

Mr BOWEN (Prospect) (1.48 pm)— Tonight in Canberra, not far from here, a concert will be held, entitled the ‘2005 Charming Vietnam Gala’. This concert is being sponsored by the government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam to celebrate its 60th anniversary. It is important that this House note that many Vietnamese people in Australia do not feel this is anything to celebrate. Transparency International rated the Hanoi regime as 102nd out of 146 nations, and it is among Asia’s bottom four in terms of corruption and government transparency. Reporters Without Borders ranked the Hanoi regime 161st out of 167 nations in its 2004 survey. On every test of human rights, the Vietnamese regime fails. Freedom of religion, freedom of speech, freedom of political association are all lacking in the Vietnam celebrated by the so-called ‘Charming Vietnam Gala’ being staged tonight. There has of course been some freeing up of the Vietnamese economy in recent years. This economic freedom needs to be matched by political freedom. A substantial number of Vietnamese Australians will be protesting at tonight’s gala and at the gala in Sydney on Wednesday, and I know some honourable members are going to join those protesters. I send from the House a message of support from the Australian parliament to these protesters and a message to continue to stand up for democracy in Vietnam.

Mr Nguyen Tuong Van

Mr BAIRD (Cook) (1.49 pm)—I rise today in relation to the case of Mr Tuong Van Nguyen, the young Australian who was convicted of smuggling drugs and who has been given the death sentence by the Singapore courts. As the House would be aware, the Australian government and opposition have been united in our calls to the executive government of Singapore to commute Mr Nguyen’s sentence to a custodial rather than capital sentence. That is a power that is constitutionally enshrined in Singapore, and we in this place, almost without exception, have asked for Singapore to use this power. Mr Nguyen is deserving of clemency. Nobody disputes the gravity or the stupidity of Mr Nguyen’s actions, nor do we defend Mr Nguyen for his crimes; we do, however, strongly believe that Mr Nguyen does not deserve to die. Mr Nguyen, to his credit, has cooperated fully with the authorities in Singapore and Australia.

Mr Speaker, as you would be aware, the Amnesty International Parliamentary Group has circulated a petition to all members and senators, as well as parliamentary staff, calling on the Singaporean cabinet to revisit this case. I thank each of the more than 300 respondents so far, and I urge all members, senators and staff who have not yet responded to do so. The honourable Laurie Ferguson, the member for Reid, and I will be meeting with the Singaporean High Commissioner at 11.30 tomorrow morning to pre-
sent this very personal plea for Mr Nguyen’
life. I call again as an Australian and as a
member of this parliament for the Singapo-
rean executive government to reconsider Mr
Nguyen’s case and to show compassion by
commuting his sentence. *(Time expired)*

**Coast FM**

Mr GEORGANAS (Hindmarsh) (1.51 pm)—Two Sundays ago, I was very hon-
oured to attend the community radio Coast
FM Radiothon and to officially declare the
Coast FM Radiothon open. Being a commit-
ted Coast FM listener myself for a number of
years, I felt very honoured to have been in-
vited to officiate at the opening. Many pro-
fessional people volunteer at Coast FM—and
there are a few beginners too—but, whatever
their background, Coast FM is like another
family to the many people that volunteer
their services to the radio station and the au-
dience that listens to them. Running a com-
unity radio station does not come without
its fair share of struggles. Funds are some-
times tight and getting the equipment that
you need can be tricky, but Coast FM’s vol-
unteers do a great job under the guidance of
the committee of management and in par-
ticular Coast FM President Donald Camp-
bell, whom some may remember as Austra-
lia’s No. 1 FIFA Soccer referee. Donald
Campbell and the committee are dedicated to
providing the community listeners with a
wide variety of both community information
and music and must be congratulated on their
tireless efforts and the fantastic service they
provide for the community.

It is also important to acknowledge that
Coast FM would not be able to provide an
alternative for listeners if it were not for the
support of their many sponsors and the dedi-
cation of their many volunteers. Even on
days when they can think of better things to
do, these volunteers, producers and present-
ers know that the show must go on—and so
it does. For any community organisation,
fundraising is always a challenge, and so the
support of sponsors and volunteers makes all
the difference. I understand that plans are
afoot to refurbish the studio so that the sound
quality of the broadcasts is improved. Of
course, that all takes money, and the ra-
diothon is an important part of realising
those plans and ensuring a great future for
Coast FM community radio.

**Education: School Bullying**

Mr LAMING (Bowman) (1.52 pm)—
Every child deserves a safe and nurturing
upbringing. Bullying is a scourge around the
world, and in Australia it has been brought to
the national platform by the hard work of the
Allanah and Madeleine Foundation and the
National Coalition Against Bullying. Today I
would like to congratulate John Bertrand and
the Hon. Alastair Nicholson, who are the
chairs of those organisations, on the work
they did at the Melbourne conference over
the weekend. Of course, most children have
overwhelmingly positive experiences at
school—not all of us, of course—but figures
indicate that one in six children are subjected
to bullying at least once a week. That must
be enormously physically damaging at times,
psychologically injurious and socially isolat-
ing.

I want to congratulate Minister Brendan
Nelson on the $29.9 million committed over
four years towards national strategies, further
dialogue, promoting best practice in school
clusters and values discussions around the
country. In addition to that, because bullying
is far broader than just a targeted approach
will deal with, we need to ensure that civics
education is promoted in schools and that
there is adequate awareness of issues like
drugs, through the National Schools Drug
Education Strategy, which is now funded
with $47½ million over four years. The
words of Edith Hamilton are very pertinent
here in that humanity has this unique capacity sometimes to learn from the experience of others, and yet sometimes a complete and tragic disinclination to do so. Breaking the cycle of bullying is exactly what this initiative must achieve. *(Time expired)*

**Creswick Forestry Fiesta**

**Ms KING** (Ballarat) *(1.54 pm)*—I rise to congratulate the Creswick community on another fantastic Creswick Forestry Fiesta, which was held yesterday. This is the 10th time that the festival has been held, and it was a wonderful opportunity to see the Creswick community out in force. In the parade were the garden society and the CFA from Mollonghip, Newlyn, Creswick itself and Dean, all out there supporting the primary schools in my district. Russell Castley, the secretary, did a fantastic job organising all of the events and stalls.

I must admit I had the opportunity to participate in something I never thought I would, and I hope it is a long time before I have to do it again: a gopher race, in which many of us in the community got to sit on a scooter and race each other. It was a terrific opportunity. I managed to come third, which was most amusing. I congratulate the Creswick community on a fantastic festival.

**National Values Framework**

**Mr CIOBO** (Moncrieff) *(1.55 pm)*—Recently I ran a competition in my electorate of Moncrieff with all of my local primary schools. The purpose of the competition was for local schools to develop a student charter that reflected the Howard government’s new national values framework for schools. There are nine key values, and I was very pleased with the strong response from a number of schools within my electorate. In particular, I congratulate class 7A of Benowa State School, who won the competition, and runners-up, class 6/7 of Worongary State School. The children from Benowa State School received a day out at Seaworld, who kindly supported the competition, and I was delighted to host a pizza party for the children at Worongary State School. In the past week, I had the opportunity to visit Worongary for their pizza party and Benowa to present them with their prize. I congratulate them. It is wonderful that the young students of today reflect those nine key values and incorporate them into their school ethos.

**Mr Nguyen Tuong Van**

**Mr MURPHY** (Lowe) *(1.57 pm)*—In relation to the plight of Tuong Van Nguyen, I would like to bring to the attention of the parliament the late Pope John Paul II’s Encyclical Evangelium Vitae chapters 56 and 57. In relation to chapter 56, inter alia, I would like to read:

> The primary purpose of the punishment which society inflicts is to ‘redress the disorder caused by the offence’.

It is clear that, for these purposes to be achieved, the nature and extent of the punishment must be carefully evaluated and decided upon, and ought not to go to the extreme of executing the offender except in cases of absolute necessity: in other words, when it would not be possible otherwise to defend society. Today, however, as a result of steady improvements in the organisation of the penal system, such cases are very rare, if not practically non-existent.

I have had many requests to my office. I am totally opposed to the death penalty. A constituent wrote to me this morning:

> Thank you for passing my comments to Mr Kevin Rudd and Mr Beazley. He has replied, outlining his efforts and that of the Labor Party’s
federal caucus in trying to save Mr Nguyen’s life. I am grateful for the communication and time that you and Mr Rudd and Mr Beazley have spent replying to me. I have also emailed New South Wales senators and have received only a reply from one, Senator Nettle, who is of course very concerned too.

In relation to Mr Nguyen, I urge every member of parliament to stand up and condemn the death penalty and save this man’s life, now. (Time expired)

**Wind Turbines**

**Mr BROADBENT** (McMillan) (1.58 pm)—In my electorate of McMillan is the most beautiful landscape stretching from part of Greg Hunt’s electorate of Flinders all the way towards Peter McGauran’s electorate of Gippsland. In that beautiful landscaped area is South Gippsland’s coastline. On that coastline have been placed some of the ugliest things you have ever seen. As you come over the Kilcunda hilltop and look at the vista going down towards Wonthaggi, there in front of you are four or five of the ugliest wind turbines you have ever seen inflicted on a landscape in Australia. When will the time come that state governments like the Bracks government listen seriously to what local people are saying about planning? It is just despicable that they have walked away from the community at Wonthaggi and said, ‘We will inflict upon you these ugly, enormous, grey’—

**Mr Laurie Ferguson**—You were in favour of it before!

**Mr BROADBENT**—I am not in favour of these things, and people know that. (Time expired)

**The SPEAKER**—Order! It being 2.00 pm, in accordance with standing order 43, the time for members’ statements has concluded.

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**CONDOLENCES**

**Dr William Robert Lawrence**

**The SPEAKER** (2.01 pm)—I inform the House of the death of William Robert Lawrence, a member of this House, for the division of Wimmera, from 1949 to 1958. As a mark of respect to the memory of William Lawrence, I invite honourable members to rise in their places.

Honourable members having stood in their places—

**The SPEAKER**—I thank the House.

**MEMBERS FOR BRAND AND O’CONNOR: 25TH ANNIVERSARY**

**Mr HOWARD** (Bennelong—Prime Minister) (2.01 pm)—Mr Speaker, on indulgence: since the parliament last met, two very distinguished members of the House have passed the very important milestone of having served 25 years in the House of Representatives. Those two very distinguished members are the member for Brand and Leader of the Opposition, the Hon. Kim Beazley, and the member for O’Connor, the Hon. Charles Wilson Tuckey. Both of them are very honourable gentlemen and contributors to public life. It is worth recording that, since Federation, there have been 1,018 members of the House of Representatives and, of those 1,018 members, only 59 in the 104 years of federation have served for 25 years or more. I would therefore like to take the opportunity to convey my personal congratulations to both members. I pay tribute to the outstanding contribution that the member for Brand has made to public life, his commitment to his own party and the diligent fashion in which he has represented the constituents of several divisions in Western Australia over that 25-year period. It is also worth noting that since 1945, but for the three years between 1977 and 1980, a Kim Beazley has represented a section of the electors of Western Australia in the national par-
I convey to my opposite number in this place my personal congratulations and good wishes.

I also take the opportunity of thanking my colleague and friend Wilson Tuckey. Wilson is not the most retiring of members. It can be said that Wilson made an impression on this place from the moment he was elected, and he has not shrunken from that commitment over the last 25 years. I think he understands the aspirations and concerns of rural Australia. He represents one of what the former Deputy Prime Minister described as the three truly rural seats left in this place—in the sense that they are built on rural towns and rural communities. Wilson Tuckey has represented the people of O'Connor with great energy and great understanding. He has served in several portfolios as a ministerial colleague of mine. He has maintained his enthusiasm and commitment, and I admire him for that. I thank him and the member for Brand for their contribution to public life.

**INDIA: TERRORIST ATTACKS**

Mr Howard (Bennelong—Prime Minister) (2.04 pm)—With the indulgence of the House: on behalf of the government and the people of Australia, I offer our sincere condolences to the people of India, following the cowardly attacks on the marketplaces of New Delhi over the weekend. It is a further demonstration of the horror and indiscriminate violence and destruction which is tied up with modern terrorism. I know I speak for all Australians in conveying our compassion to our Indian friends.

**MEMBERS FOR BRAND AND O’CONNOR: 25TH ANNIVERSARY**

Ms Macklin (Jagajaga) (2.04 pm)—Mr Speaker, on indulgence: I too would like to offer our congratualtions to the Leader of the Opposition. As Winston Churchill once said: politics is like piano playing; the earlier you start, the better. Kim Beazley often visited Canberra as a very young boy. I can picture him in the gallery or wandering around the Hotel Kurrajong, soaking up politics and learning his father’s trade. Of course, it was not long before Kim Beazley Jr was getting involved in political debates himself, standing up for what he believes in and taking positions with which his father did not always agree. This included a young Kim, as a student politician, speaking out against the Vietnam War—a young man who was by no means a pacifist but felt very strongly that the war was wrong and that the government should not have been sending Australians to Vietnam against their will. Since then, Kim has had a long and distinguished career in federal politics in various roles, including Deputy Prime Minister, Minister for Defence, Minister for Telecommunications, Minister for Education and Training and, of course, Leader of the Opposition.

On the weekend, Kim Beazley gave us a rare personal insight into his faith. He said: Christian faith has become so closely identified with a particular brand of right wing politics, that for many people, when they reject the harsh politics of gun ownership, militant foreign policy and religious intolerance, they think they must also reject Christian faith. They are not the same thing. I do not believe that any partisan position or viewpoint should ever become a litmus test for a person’s faith. It’s a very serious thing when you say that people of a particular faith must support a particular political viewpoint.

Kim Beazley, as ever, his own man. Thank goodness, at this critical time when the Australian Labor Party is facing one of its biggest challenges with the Howard government’s industrial relations changes, we have a big man, with a big heart, leading the charge. Kim Beazley was born to lead this fight. This industrial relations legislation is everything that Kim Beazley is not. It is mean; it is cruel; it is indecent; it attacks the
rights of working Australians; it is small-minded; and it preys on people’s weaknesses. Kim Beazley, by contrast, rejoices in people’s strengths. The laws in government that we will introduce will be like Kim Beazley—big-hearted, decent and fair.

Mr BEAZLEY (Brand—Leader of the Opposition) (2.08 pm)—Mr Speaker, on indulgence: I thank the Prime Minister and the Deputy Leader of the Opposition for their very kind remarks. I do appreciate what they both said. I congratulate my colleague Wilson Tuckey, who came in on the same day as me. There are many things you can say about Wilson, and one thing you can say with great relish and firmness is that he never keeps you in the dark about his opinions. That is no bad attribute to have in political life and it has stood him well for a very lengthy period of time.

Somebody rang me up the day that I had the 25th anniversary and said, ‘Generally speaking, you get five years less for murder.’ Other people have been kinder in their remarks. I really do appreciate what they both said. I congratulate my colleague Wilson Tuckey, who came in on the same day as me. There are many things you can say about Wilson, and one thing you can say with great relish and firmness is that he never keeps you in the dark about his opinions. That is no bad attribute to have in political life and it has stood him well for a very lengthy period of time.

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Mr HOWARD—In reply to the Leader of the Opposition, unlike my predecessor, I come to every question time. Unlike my two Labor predecessors, I allow 20 questions at question time—the best record of accountability since the Menzies’ years.

Oil for Food Program

Mr BAIRD (2.10 pm)—My question is addressed to the Prime Minister. What is the government’s response to the Volcker report on the United Nations oil for food program, in particular the matters regarding AWB Ltd?

Mr HOWARD—I thank the member for Cook for raising what is a very important issue. I think the parliament and the nation will be aware of the Volcker report on the United Nations oil for food program, particularly the matters raised in relation to AWB Ltd and two other Australian companies. I am very concerned, as I know many members of this House are, about the findings of the Volcker inquiry. In respect of AWB Ltd, Volcker found that the company had paid the transport company, Alia, over $US221 million for inland transport and that these payments were channelled to the then government of Iraq by Alia. The committee of inquiry noted that this accounted for some 14 per cent of illicit payments made in connection with humanitarian purchases.

The government cooperated fully with the Volcker inquiry, providing all information requested by the committee. The Volcker inquiry offered no criticism of the Australian government. When I personally became aware of the Volcker inquiry’s interest in AWB Ltd, I asked that the company be encouraged to immediately cooperate fully with the inquiry. It is fair to say that in respect of AWB Ltd, Volcker found:

The evidence does not suffice to conclude that AWB had actual knowledge of Alia’s partial ownership by the government of Iraq, that it had actual knowledge of the fact that Alia did not actu-
ally perform trucking services for AWB’s wheat or that it had actual knowledge of the fact that Alia remitted the payments it received from AWB to the government of Iraq. On the other hand, it is discussed in detail below numerous documentary and circumstantial warning signs placed at least some employees of AWB on notice that payments to Alia may have been illicitly funding the Iraqi regime.

It goes without saying, I hope, that the fact that money coming from AWB Ltd ended up in the pockets of the loathsome Saddam Hussein regime is something that I—and I know many of my colleagues and I am sure many on the other side of the House—find quite unacceptable. I make no judgments beyond the findings of the Volcker inquiry about the conduct of AWB Ltd. My own knowledge and the comments that I have received regarding the people who run that company suggest that they are people of complete integrity. I make no judgments to the contrary. But, given the seriousness of the issue, I believe that there should be an independent inquiry into whether there was any breach of Australian law by those Australian companies referred to in the Volcker report. I believe that that inquiry should be armed with appropriate powers. I have sought advice on what sort of inquiry would be appropriate, and when I have received that advice I will have something further to say on the matter.

Distinguished Visitors

The Speaker (2.13 pm)—I inform the House that we have present in the gallery this afternoon Her Excellency Kolinda Grabar-Kitarovic, the Croatian Minister of Foreign Affairs and European Integration. On behalf of the House I extend to her a very warm welcome.

Honourable members—Hear, hear!

Questions Without Notice

Oil for Food Program

Mr Beazley (2.14 pm)—My question is to the Prime Minister and follows the one that he just answered from his side of the House. I refer to the Volcker report on the United Nations oil for food program and its conclusion that, between 1991 and 2003, the Australian Wheat Board paid nearly $300 million in side payments, a figure corresponding to nearly 15 per cent of the total kickbacks collected by Saddam Hussein’s regime. Does the Prime Minister accept that these payments were incompatible with United Nations Security Council resolution 661, which requires states to prevent their nationals from making any such payments to the government of Iraq? What action did the government take to ensure that the AWB complied with the Australian government’s obligations under UNSCR 661 to prevent illegal payments being made to Saddam Hussein’s regime in breach of UN sanctions against Iraq?

Mr Howard—The procedure, as I understand it, was that the contracts were transmitted through the Australian government to the United Nations for approval. That was the nature of the sanctions arrangements. In fact, AWB Ltd—and it should be said in its defence; it is a point that should be borne strongly in mind—relied very heavily on the proposition that because the contracts, including reference to transportation costs, were approved by the United Nations Sanctions Committee it was acting with United Nations authority. Indeed, Paul Volcker in his press conference after the release of his report made the point very clearly and very explicitly that the greatest criticism could be made of the failure of the United Nations itself to properly police the operations of its own resolutions.
Avian Influenza

Mr TOLLNER (2.16 pm)—My question is directed to the Minister for Foreign Affairs. Would the minister update the House on the action that Australia has taken to combat avian influenza in our region?

Mr DOWNER—I thank the honourable member for Solomon for his question and his interest. He is a good member who does a good job. Avian flu is an issue that the government is addressing not just in Australia but throughout the region.

Opposition members interjecting—

Mr DOWNER—There seem to be a lot of interjections. You must have put up a candidate against him at the last election who did not win, so let’s not forget that. Avian flu has spread, causing more than 60 deaths and leading to the destruction of millions of birds. It obviously has had a very negative effect on many farmers. Thankfully, to date it has not spread between human beings, but we must prepare for this contingency in case an outbreak of that kind does occur. In a worst-case scenario there would be a pandemic.

We have taken a lead role in the region in preparing for a possible avian influenza pandemic. We have committed $41 million to the region since 2003 to initiatives to improve detection and response capabilities. Australia has been working within APEC since 2001 to help the region prepare for pandemic threats such as avian flu. Today and tomorrow Australia will continue its regional leadership by hosting a high-level meeting in Brisbane. This will bring together 21 APEC economies, as well as a number of other countries in the South-East Asian region which are not members of APEC and the Pacific Islands Forum. I think this will be a very constructive response which will aim to identify ways in which the APEC economies can better coordinate any regional fight against outbreaks, particularly through better communications between key avian influenza experts in the region and sharing and improving the transparency of information.

I understand this is the first time that the principal disaster coordinators from all the APEC economies have come together in one place. Let me just say that, in addition to this regional effort, Australia is investing over $180 million for domestic preparedness and that on 28 October we updated our travel bulletin to strengthen the references on avian influenza. I conclude by saying that we should bear in mind that there is no certainty that avian influenza will become a pandemic. I note that the Australian Medical Association president said today that there is no immediate danger of an avian influenza pandemic and that the WHO official spokeswoman said that ‘avian influenza is still not something that we see as a huge risk to the human population’. So we need to bear those things in mind. But, as I have said, I think today’s APEC meeting will be a very useful way of helping to coordinate a response from throughout the Asia-Pacific region.

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

The SPEAKER (2.19 pm)—I inform the House that we have present in the gallery this afternoon the Lord Mayor of Darwin, Mr Peter Adamson. On behalf of the House I extend to him a very warm welcome.

Honourable members—Hear, hear!

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Oil for Food Program

Mr RUDD (2.20 pm)—My question is to the Minister for Foreign Affairs. I refer to a letter sent by the Australian Wheat Board in October 2000 to the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade advising DFAT of its proposal to pay a Jordanian trucking company to transport Australian wheat within Iraq. I also refer to DFAT’s reply that it could see ‘no
reason from an international legal perspective why the AWB could not enter into such an agreement’. Minister, in responding to the Wheat Board did DFAT consult the UN on the AWB letter, given that nearly six months before that the UN Office of Legal Affairs had specifically advised that any payment to a Jordanian trucking company, Alia, without the explicit approval of the UN Sanctions Committee would violate the sanctions regime against Iraq?

Mr DOWNER—I thank the honourable member for his question. I did notice a report in a newspaper on 29 October that correspondence was exchanged between DFAT and the AWB during the second half of 1999 and that Alia was mentioned in this correspondence. That report is in fact misleading. The letter exchanged between the AWB and DFAT was not until October-November 2000, and the exchange of letters was in reference to a general inquiry on the possible use of Jordanian transport companies. The exchange contained no mention whatsoever of Alia or any specific company.

Mr Rudd—Oh, right! We just waved it through. You just waved it through.

The SPEAKER—Order!

Mr DOWNER—Oh, Pixie!

Mr Rudd—$300 million to Iraq and you waved it through.

The SPEAKER—Order! The member for Griffith!

Mr Downer interjecting—

The SPEAKER—Order! The Minister for Foreign Affairs!

Economy

Mr BROADBENT (2.22 pm)—My question is addressed to the Treasurer. Treasurer, would you outline the recent data on private sector credit? What does this data indicate for the Australian economy?

Mr COSTELLO—I thank the honourable member for McMillan for his question and I acknowledge the interest that he has in home buyers in his electorate, one of the growth corridors of Melbourne, and how well he represents them. He would be interested to know that the Reserve Bank today released the monthly credit series for September showing that private sector credit increased 0.8 per cent and was 13.3 per cent higher over the year to September. The really interesting thing about these figures, though, is that credit for housing has substantially moderated. It was growing at a rate of around 20 per cent in late 2003 to the beginning of 2004, but it is now growing at a rate of around 13 per cent. It shows that people are not borrowing as much in relation to housing, that the housing market has stabilised somewhat, and we have seen the re-entry of first home buyers into the housing market in greater numbers than there has been for some time.

So why is it that credit is pretty stable if credit for housing is moderating? The answer is that we have seen quite a pick-up in credit for business, which around the end of 2003 to the beginning of 2004 was growing at a rate of about eight per cent and is now growing at an annualised rate of about 13 per cent, which is very significant. What that tells us about the state of the Australian economy is that, as the government has been predicting for some time now, the composition of growth in the economy is beginning to change. We have had a welcome moderation in relation to the housing sector and a big pick-up in business investment. Business profitability levels as a proportion of total factor income are now at the highest recorded; that is, the profit share of the economy to total factor income is at the highest recorded. What that tells you is Australian business is profitable, business investment is beginning to pick up and we are laying down
good investment for future growth opportunities. This is a welcome rebalancing of the Australian economy, which I believe will be welcomed by first home buyers in particular and especially by businesses as business investment strengthens through the year.

Oil for Food Program

Mr Rudd (2.25 pm)—My question is to the Minister for Foreign Affairs. Can the minister confirm that each decision-making process for AWB grain sales to Iraq in the 1999-2003 period involved (1) signed AWB contracts being submitted to DFAT by the AWB, (2) DFAT submitting those contracts to the Australian mission to the United Nations in New York, (3) the DFAT mission in New York sending those contracts on to the UN Office of the Iraq Program and (4) DFAT Canberra notifying the AWB of the approval of those contracts? Does the minister now accept that this provided in fact the Australian government with multiple opportunities to assure itself that its obligations under UN Security Council resolution 661, preventing payments to Saddam Hussein’s regime, were in fact being honoured?

Mr Downer—First of all, let me explain the process, but before I do so let me make this point. The AWB’s use of Alia was not specified in the oil for food contracts. The Volcker report noted that the UN was not advised the AWB was making payments to Alia for inland transport costs. As far as the government is aware, the first knowledge of Alia and concerns relating to the AWB’s use of the company was in the context of the Volcker inquiry.

The second point I would make is that DFAT did not approve oil for food contracts; that was the responsibility of the United Nations. That is made, I would have thought, patently clear in the Volcker report. The United Nations, through the 661 sanctions committee and the UN Secretariat’s Office of the Iraq Program, was responsible for all contract approvals. UN customs experts had responsibility to evaluate the price and value of contracts. That is highlighted by the Volcker inquiry. DFAT’s role in the process was as follows. Commercial suppliers would negotiate and agree on a contract with their Iraqi counterparts. DFAT was not a party to the contract.

Mr Rudd interjecting—

The Speaker—Order! The member for Griffith!

Mr Downer—Contracts were forwarded to DFAT only for submission via our UN mission in New York to the UN’s Office of the Iraq Program and the 661 sanctions committee. DFAT examined contract paperwork, and once satisfied that this—

Mr Wilkie—You haven’t got a clue, Alex. The Speaker—Order! The member for Swan is warned!

Mr Rudd—$300 million to Saddam, and you don’t give a damn!

Mr Downer—Mr Speaker, the member for Griffith reminds me that the Australian Labor Party took a $500,000 donation from Saddam Hussein’s regime in 1975.

Mr Rudd—You don’t give a damn!

The Speaker—Order! The member for Griffith!

Mr Rudd—You don’t give a damn!

The Speaker—Order! The member for Griffith is warned!

Mr Downer—For them, having supported Saddam Hussein in recent years, to accuse us of supporting Saddam Hussein, that is really, really rich. That is the richest thing I have heard in this parliament.

Mr Beazley—Mr Speaker, I take a point of order on relevance: this is completely unrelated to the question he was asked, but in
case the foreign minister thinks this is smart—

The SPEAKER—Order! The leader will resume his seat!

Mr Beazley—this $300 million—

The SPEAKER—Order! The leader will resume his seat!

Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER—The leader will resume his seat! The Minister for Foreign Affairs will come back to the question.

Mr DOWNER—I would, Mr Speaker, but the interjections are constant—

The SPEAKER—The minister will come to the question.

Mr DOWNER—and disorderly.

The SPEAKER—The minister will not respond to interjections.

Mr DOWNER—DFAT examined the contract paperwork and, once they were satisfied that this had been properly completed and that the transaction did not appear to infringe the UN sanctions regime the documentation was submitted to the UN in New York. The UN customs experts in the Office of the Iraq Program had responsibility to evaluate the price and the value of contracts and, following the approval of the contracts by the UN, DFAT would issue an export permit authorising the export to Iraq. As I said, just in case honourable members opposite think they can make a political point, AWB’s use of Alia was not specified in the oil for food contracts and the Volcker inquiry has made that perfectly clear. It has made it perfectly clear that the government was not in any shape or form involved in any knowledge or participation in a process that led to the funding of Saddam Hussein’s regime.

International Competitiveness

Mr CAUSLEY (2.30 pm)—My question is directed to the Deputy Prime Minister and the Minister for Trade. Would the Deputy Prime Minister inform the House how Australia has improved its international competitiveness and how our position can be further strengthened?

Mr VAILE—I thank the member for Page for his question. I recognise his interest in increasing competitiveness and productivity in Australia so that we can be more efficient and competitive in the international marketplace. The member for Page would be interested to note that a recent report released by the World Economic Forum shows Australia has climbed from 14th to 10th in the World Economic Forum’s 2005 competitiveness ranking. So we have moved up four places in the competitiveness ranking on a global scale in terms of the Australian economy. The report said that Australia moved up four places because of, among other things, its sound public finances—and the government can take significant responsibility for that—and also the innovative nature of its business sector. We know that is correct as well not just of the domestic circumstance but also in the way we engage in business internationally.

Unfortunately, Australia only ranked 77th on flexibility on wage determination within our economy by comparison with other countries. It was 77th on that index compared to 10th on the competitiveness ranking. That is another example of why the government’s workplace relations reforms are so important. It is so important that we implement these to maintain our competitive edge in the international marketplace. If we are to remain internationally competitive we need to make our workplace relations systems simpler as well as fairer. We also need to make our workplace relations systems fairer and to provide a better balance in the workplace between employee and employer. That is the view of a number of key organisations throughout the economy. It is certainly a
view supported by the Federal Chamber of Automotive Industries. The FCAI has said:
The ability to implement work practices to support flexible manufacturing systems is crucial to the strengthened competitiveness and ongoing viability of the Australian automotive industry.

Of course, we know that is one of our manufacturing industries that has really made significant gains in expanding their export operations, so we should be supporting their view. Our largest exporters of manufactured goods can see the government’s workplace relations reforms are in the national interest and in the interests of manufacturing industries in Australia.

Mr Tanner—the M word.

Mr V AILE—the M word—he is awake now; I was waiting for him to hear it.

Mr Tanner—Magnificent.

The SPEAKER—The member for Melbourne is warned.

Mr V AILE—It is also interesting to note that the member for Lilley recognises this, particularly when he is talking to business groups and the business community. In a speech last week the member for Lilley said: Let me take this opportunity to clear up any misconception on Labor’s attitude to proposed industrial relations changes.

Labor has an open mind to constructive proposals that will lift productivity ...

I say to the member for Lilley that this is exactly the focus that the government has in proposing these workplace relations reforms. I hope that the member for Lilley will stay true to his word, because the FCAI see the government’s workplace relations policy as constructive; so do the BCA and the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry. I look forward to the member for Lilley holding the line on this, pursuing greater productivity and increasing competitiveness globally. The first thing to do is to improve the workplace relations system in Australia.

**Oil for Food Program**

Mr BEAZLEY (2.34 pm)—My question is to the Prime Minister. Will the inquiry the Prime Minister has announced today have the authority to determine the state of ministerial knowledge of the scheme at any point of time of its operation and if the Australian government sanctioned in any way the payment of $300 million received ultimately by Saddam Hussein? Is the Prime Minister aware that these funds are now being used to support the insurgency?

Mr HOWARD—I have not got final advice on the options in relation to the inquiry, but when I announced it would be a fully independent inquiry I meant precisely that. This government has nothing to hide on this issue—nothing to hide at all. I can only say that. We will see what time and investigation reveal. I make this point to the Leader of the Opposition. I would have thought that, in an inquiry established by the United Nations to report on the oil for food program and the involvement of countries and companies in that oil for food program, having received in the case of Australia full responses and cooperation and full documentation, if there were anything lacking in the behaviour of Australia in relation to her obligations the Volcker inquiry would have so reported.

**Workplace Relations**

Mr RICHARDSON (2.36 pm)—My question is addressed to the Treasurer. Would the Treasurer outline recent international comment on the government’s workplace relations reforms? Are there any other views?

Mr COSTELLO—I thank the honourable member for Kingston for his question and I can inform him that there has been substantive support for the government’s proposed industrial relations changes from the
International Monetary Fund, which in its report on Australia in September 2005 said about the government’s package of reforms:

The mission urged the implementation of this package of reforms to widen employment opportunities and raise productivity by enhancing flexibility in work arrangements.

There we have the IMF, the International Monetary Fund, probably the premier world economic body, urging the introduction of the government’s industrial relations changes. This report from the IMF did not find favour with the ACTU, Mr Speaker, I regret to inform you. The ACTU wrote back to the IMF accusing it of a ‘deplorable intervention in a controversial domestic policy debate’. Sharan Burrow, writing on 12 September 2005, said the IMF in its report was ‘selective, tendentious and shallow’ and that the report was ‘reflecting poorly on the professionalism, independence and expertise of the IMF review team’. Not only did she write back with an abusive letter to the IMF but she hotfooted it over to Washington to tell the IMF that it was wrong and that the ACTU was right.

On a question of economic policy, I wonder who would have more credibility: the IMF or the ACTU. A tough call. Anyway, the IMF has now published its reply of 27 October 2005 to Ms Burrow’s complaints on its web site. The IMF notes:

... this improvement in flexibility, supported by increased competition ... and other structural reforms, has been an important contributor to Australia’s excellent record of job creation and productivity growth during the past 14 years ...

... the proposed industrial relations reforms as further steps in the same direction, which will improve the functioning of the labor market and help sustain Australia’s strong economic performance in future ...

... the benefits of economic reforms in Australia, including improvements in the functioning of the labor market, have been substantial, and this gives a sound basis for expecting positive results from further labor market reforms.

And then it politely says to Ms Burrow:

Hence, I can not accept the statement in your letter ...

The IMF, probably the premier economic decision-making body of the world, has looked at Australia’s industrial relations proposed changes and it has endorsed them. It has been attacked for doing so by the ACTU. It has given the ACTU a fair hearing and it has rejected in its entirety the claims of the ACTU.

Periodically we hear the claim from the Labor Party that they are going to stand for economic responsibility—’In the future we are going to stand for economic responsibility; we may not have in the past but in the future we are going to change our ways’—and they charge Australian business lots of money to tell them how they are going to change their ways. The only problem is that every time it comes to a concrete, practical reform this party, which deep down want you to think that they believe in economic reform, never quite get around to supporting it—never quite make it. Industrial relations—never quite make it. Welfare to work—never quite make it. The government cuts taxes in the budget; the Labor Party vote against them. Don’t think they are against tax cuts. No, they only vote against them. The reality is that, if the Australian Labor Party want to get back into business, if they want to have a skerrick of economic responsibility, if they want to show that they are now a post-Latham party, the Australian Labor Party will support the biggest micro-economic reform that we could possibly do in this country: reform of Australia’s industrial relations system.

**Workplace Relations**

Ms KATE ELLIS (2.41 pm)—My question is to the Prime Minister. I refer to a reg-
istered AWA for the Blue Galah Backpackers Hostel in Adelaide which contains the following rates of pay clause:

The hourly rate of pay incorporates a component for annual leave, annual leave loading and sick leave, and as such those provisions do not apply.

Is it not the case that under the South Australian boarding and guest houses award the relevant leave loading is 17.5 per cent, the same as the current community standard? Isn’t the reason the Prime Minister will not guarantee that the community standard leave loading will be maintained is that it is already being undercut by existing AWAs such as the one at the Blue Galah in Adelaide?

Mr HOWARD—In answer to the member for Adelaide, without checking I am not aware of the provisions of the South Australian award. Let me say in relation to leave loadings and penalty rates generally that, if someone is on an award under the new system, that person will get the payments in relation to those matters that are prescribed by the award in relation to agreements. There will be a fair pay and conditions standard, which has already been explained in great detail, and in the absence of explicit provision to the contrary there is a default provision in the new policy which will guarantee delivery of the award provisions in relation to penalty rates and loadings.

Workplace Relations

Mrs VALE (2.43 pm)—My question is addressed to the Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations. Would the minister update the House on how Australia’s economy and society will benefit from a modern workplace relations system and are there any alternative views?

Mr ANDREWS—I thank the member for Hughes for her question. The reality is that a modern industrial relations system will be of great benefit to Australia’s workplaces and the employers and employees of Australia. Indeed, this is something which various members of the union movement and the Labor Party have recognised on occasions. As far back as 1990 the later-to-be Premier of New South Wales, Bob Carr, supported a national workplace relations system, saying that ‘six different systems was an absurd luxury’. Just last week the Secretary of the ACTU, Mr Combet, endorsed the need to rationalise the number of awards, saying:

We’re not as a matter of principle opposed to the idea of rationalising the number of awards and doing it in an orderly way.

And, indeed, the opposition spokesman, the member for Perth, has said:

If we were to start again as a nation with a clean slate, and recognise that we now have a national and an international economy, then you could certainly look at creating a single national system for industrial relations.

These are statements of support for measures that the government intends to introduce in relation to the workplace relations system in Australia. They stand in stark contrast to some of the hysterical statements we have heard from other union officials and leaders over the last few weeks—for example, we have had Brian Boyd from the Victorian Trades Hall Council saying that this is going to enslave workplaces in Australia, and Andy Gillespie from the South Coast Labour Council predicts a real breakdown in society. John Robertson from Unions New South Wales says that this is an attack on the way in which our children are going to be raised. Janet Giles from Unions SA—listen to this—says that more workers would die of asbestosis related diseases, because of the changes in the industrial relations system. I suppose that happened in the UK when it was changed there! But it gets worse. We have Bob Smith in the Victorian parliament saying that in America women and children were killed and this is the road that the Prime Minister wants to take us down. What hysterical
nonsense from Bob Smith! On top of that we have Workers Online, the official organ of LaborNET, reporting: ‘The federal government’s changes to industrial relations could kill people.’ What hysterical nonsense we are hearing from the Labor Party and union leaders about this!

No wonder we are getting this hysterical response, when we had on Lateline on 10 August the President of the Australian Council of Trade Unions—the senior official of the union movement in Australia—saying, in support of the campaign that the unions are running: ‘I need a mum or dad of someone who has been seriously injured or killed. That would be fantastic.’ No wonder we are getting these hysterical statements from union leaders around Australia when they have been given a lead by Sharan Burrow, the President of the ACTU, saying, ‘It would be fantastic for our campaign to get hold of the mum or dad of someone who has been killed in Australia.’ That is a totally abysmal comment coming from the labour movement.

Have we heard a word about this from the Leader of the Opposition? Have we heard one word, one phrase or one sentence of condemnation from the Leader of the Opposition on this? Not a word. The reason is that he is a captive of the union bosses in Australia. When it comes to policy in Australia the Leader of the Opposition is a policy free zone. He is sitting in the passenger seat doing, once again, what others tell him to do.

Workplace Relations

Mr STEPHEN SMITH (2.48 pm)—My question is to the Prime Minister. I refer to the Prime Minister’s answer to the previous question and to the government’s $40 million advertising campaign, both of which assert that specified award conditions like penalty rates, shift loadings, overtime and annual leave loadings will be ‘protected by law’ under the government’s industrial relations changes. I also refer the Prime Minister to the Blue Galah AWA, which contains another clause that states that all rates of pay ‘include a loading to compensate for all shift, weekend, overtime and public holidays and other penalties and no additional penalties are payable’. Prime Minister, isn’t it the case that, under the government’s changes, rather than being protected by law employees will in a single line in an AWA lose their penalty rates and leave loadings?

Mr HOWARD—As I said in answer to the member for Adelaide, I have not seen that AWA and I am not going to comment on it and I am not aware, without reference, of the provisions of the South Australian award. But the situation is as outlined in the government’s publicity and is as I have previously said: if somebody continues under an award—and that will be the case for very large numbers of workers—then the terms and provisions of that award are in fact maintained by law. So much so that I take an example of somebody who is employed under the nurses award in Victoria. Under that award provision there is an even more generous allotment for long service leave than is specified in the Victorian legislation. That more generous allotment of long service leave will continue for not only current but also future employees who are employed under the award. That is exactly the sort of protection that we had in mind when we spoke of it, and I thank the member for Perth for raising the issue.

Mr Stephen Smith—That is not the protection for penalty rates and you know it.

Mr HOWARD—Quite clearly, if a person is under an award then the provisions of the award will continue.

Mr Stephen Smith—That is not the protection for leave loading—
The SPEAKER—The member for Perth has asked his question.

Mr HOWARD—If a person is negotiating an agreement then the fair pay and conditions standard will apply, and penalty rates and so forth will, as we have indicated, be matters of negotiation. But, in the absence of specific provisions, the provisions in the award will apply by default.

Israel

Mr TURNBULL (2.50 pm)—My question is addressed to the Minister for Foreign Affairs.

Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER—Order! The member for Wentworth will commence his question again.

Mr TURNBULL—My question is addressed to the Minister for Foreign Affairs. Would the minister inform the House of the government’s response to the Iranian President’s call for Israel to be ‘wiped off the map’?

Mr DOWNER—First, I thank the honourable member for Wentworth for his question. I can say that he contacted me over the weekend about this issue and I know that he and many of his constituents are deeply concerned about this. Indeed, on 26 October, at an anti-Zionist conference—as it was described—in Tehran, the Iranian President openly called for the state of Israel to be ‘wiped off the map’. This call from the leader of a significant nation state is one of the most appalling, dangerous and unacceptable views that we have heard for a very long time. Such extremist views are totally unacceptable. They do nothing to reassure the international community that Iran is prepared to be a responsible international citizen. This appalling outburst—especially at this time—is particularly troubling given Iran’s apparent nuclear ambitions.

On Friday I called the Iranian ambassador to register Australia’s strong condemnation of these remarks, and my department at a senior level did the same thing, calling in the ambassador. Our embassy in Tehran is also making representations to the Iranian government along these lines. Some saner heads in Tehran have been trying to see a walk back from the President’s position. The foreign ministry issued a statement saying that Iran has never threatened use of force against any country—but Iran, and especially its President, its head of state, needs to understand that the world will take it at its word and will not tolerate threats of this kind to international peace and security.

Australia has been a long-term and strong supporter of Israel. Israel is a nation-state which is constantly under threat and has constantly had to resort to a fight for its very existence. To many Israelis, and to Jews around the world, the Iranian President’s comments confirm what they felt they knew about Iran’s intent. For the rest of the world his comments have merely demonstrated the desire of his government to be a constant threat, in one way or another, to the state of Israel. We will continue to support the state of Israel and continue to fight against these extreme views that should not be tolerated at all in this day and age. We are united and unequivocal in our fight against anti-Semitism whenever and wherever it is encountered.

Mr BEAZLEY (Brand—Leader of the Opposition) (2.54 pm)—Mr Speaker, on indulgence, the opposition join with the remarks of the Minister for Foreign Affairs in relation to the threat that was issued to the state of Israel, so savagely, to wipe it off the face of the earth. In the context of issues with regard to the possible possession of nuclear weapons—or seeking to obtain them, in the case of Iran—that posed some really quite serious issues as far as the peace of the
world is concerned. The United Nations Security Council appropriately took that matter up. The views of the opposition on this matter have also been conveyed to the Iranian authorities by our foreign affairs spokesman.

An incident having occurred in the gallery—

Treasurer

Mr SWAN (2.55 pm)—Mr Speaker, my question is directed to the Treasurer. Will the Treasurer inform the House whether he intends to still be here to bring down the 2006-07 budget next year?

Mr COSTELLO—I look forward to continuing to discharge my office and to keep the Australian economy strong. Can I say that one of the things that give me greatest pleasure in this House is to be opposed by the member for Lilley. It would be a shame to miss him.

Rail Infrastructure

Ms PANOPoulos (2.56 pm)—Mr Speaker, my question is addressed to the Minister for Transport and Regional Services. Would the minister update the House on recent initiatives to further develop Australia’s rail network?

Mr TRUSS—May I compliment the member for Indi and others on this side of the House for their strong interest in upgrading Australia’s rail network and the importance of improving our capacity to deal with the growing freight task. The member for Indi and I both welcomed the announcement on Friday by the ARTC that it will invest $560 million to upgrade the rail line between Sydney and Melbourne. The ARTC is the Australian government-owned company that has the responsibility for implementing the government’s investment in rail infrastructure.

This announcement is a part of $1.4 billion to be spent on the Melbourne-Sydney-Braybourne rail corridor to meet some of the anticipated doubling of the freight task on that route over the next 10 years, so it is a critical infrastructure development. This particular investment will provide over 220 kilometres of new passing loops, an extensive upgrading of the railway signalling system, more than 290,000 additional concrete sleepers, the construction of a direct standard gauge connection between the north-south and east-west corridors at Brooklyn in Melbourne, and also a significant upgrading of the overall management and operation of that system.

The pleasing news is that this investment will take about 2½ hours off the time taken for a freight train to do the journey between Sydney and Melbourne. That is a significant advance in making rail more competitive. With continuing investment we can do even better than that. It is vitally important that we have a strong and competitive rail system, particularly after the years of neglect by Labor. They simply did nothing for the rail system in their years in office. They left us not just with the infamous rail gauge state barriers but with 22 different safe working systems and 18 different train communication systems. So we have had these barriers to prevent the train system from operating smoothly and efficiently. We cannot afford to featherbed that system anymore. It has a vital task to perform in ensuring that Australia can move its freight and exports around the nation efficiently. This investment will help achieve some of those objectives and help make trains move more efficiently around the country.

Regional Partnerships

Mr CREAN (2.59 pm)—My question is to the Prime Minister. Did the Prime Minister announce a $50,000 Regional Partnerships grant for the Newman town centre in the middle of last year’s election campaign?
Prime Minister, was this announcement made just 24 hours after the Department of Transport and Regional Services declared the grant application dead in the water? Did the Prime Minister also announce the grant after the department had advised the applicant: ‘Under the caretaker conventions, no decisions on funding requests can be made until a new government is formed’? Prime Minister, why did your government ignore both departmental advice and the caretaker conventions when it announced the grant in your name?

Mr HOWARD—I thank the member for Hotham for his question. Can I make a couple of points. Firstly, ministers make decisions, not public servants. That is the first point I make. The second point I make is that there was no—

Mr Crean—in a caretaker period!

Mr HOWARD—No, it was not. It was an election commitment. It was during an election. Remember the election? I know you would like to forget it—although I think you would have done better, Simon. Brian Loughnane was right about that.

Mr Costello—He would certainly have been a shadow Treasurer.

Mr HOWARD—Yes, a much better shadow Treasurer. This was a $50,000 commitment, of an overall amount of $105,000, contributed to by the Commonwealth government and local interests, including the local council, and there was a small contribution from BlueScope Steel. It was a $105,000 commitment to enhance the business centre of a small township called Newman. Newman—if anybody knows anything about Western Australia and the export industries of this nation—has made a massive contribution to the export capacity of Western Australia and, quite frankly, I am very pleased to defend the decision. It was a decision that we made to commit to that. It has been implemented. The money was allocated in the budget. As always, an agreement has been entered into between the department and the recipient regarding the terms and conditions of disbursing the amount.

I might also point out that, according to my reading of the letter of 16 September, it did not amount to what the member for Hotham suggested. It did not declare it dead in the water; it in fact requested further information and indicated that, if that information were not provided, the application could not proceed. But let me just go back to the point I made right at the beginning: with no disrespect to public servants who give advice, in the end, as you will remember from your days in government—and I address through you, Mr Speaker, the member for Hotham—decisions are taken by ministers. A decision was taken by me to support this program, just as I took a decision during the election campaign to provide two much larger amounts of money, in relation to which there has not been a zephyr of criticism from those who sit opposite. I think of Whitten Oval in the member for Gellibrand’s seat—no criticism of that. That was a decision—

Mr Costello—He wanted it for Windy Hill!

Mr HOWARD—He wanted it for Windy Hill! I do not recall—and there ought not to have been either—any criticism from the member for Barton on the allocation of the money for the upgrade of Kogarah Oval. The reality is that governments take decisions and they must be judged by those decisions. They cannot hide behind public servants. I have not sought to do so. I defend the decision and I make no apologies for it.

Mr Crean—I seek leave to table two documents.

Leave granted.

Mr Crean—the first document is a letter from the day before the announcement out-
lining the seven reasons why it could not proceed. The second is a letter from the department advising no funding because of the caretaker period. No funding could be announced during the election campaign.

Work for the Dole

Mr MICHAEL FERGUSON (3.04 pm)—My question is addressed to the Minister for Workforce Participation. Would the minister please inform the House how Work for the Dole gives participants in rural and regional Australia, like Bass, the skills and experience to help them get a job? Minister, are there any alternative policies in this regard?

Mr DUTTON—I thank the member for Bass very much for his question. I congratulate him on his support for the Work for the Dole program. He has been a wonderful member in such a short period of time for Bass. It is a refreshing start for Bass to have somebody who is working hard. The member for Bass is of course very proud of the coalition’s improvements in unemployment in Bass, because unemployment has dropped from 9.9 per cent under Labor to 5.6 per cent under this government today.

Recently I attended the electorate of the member for Bass to visit the award-winning Mount Barrow Work for the Dole project, which received the Prime Minister’s award for the best Work for the Dole activity last year. It was a wonderful activity. I congratulate the local member for his support. He knows, as we on this side of the House do, that since 1997 there have been about 422,000 people who have participated in a wonderful program. It has provided people with the work experience and with the opportunity to help themselves into work, to gain experience in a team-like environment, and we know that this government stands committed to the Work for the Dole program.

I am asked for any other views, and of course the views of the Labor Party on Work for the Dole are well known. We know that the Labor Party hate Work for the Dole. We know that, since the program came in in 1997, on about 336 occasions members opposite have taken the opportunity to attack Work for the Dole. But there are, we know, two silent supporters of Work for the Dole on the other side. We need to highlight them again today, because they deserve recognition. I want to recognise today the member for Shortland. She has had something very quiet, but positive nonetheless, to say about Work for the Dole. And there is our old friend the member for Franklin. It is probably no coincidence that they are seated beside each other, because I know they talk regularly about Work for the Dole. They support it. It is a great program. The Leader of the Opposition should listen to their sound counsel, follow the lead of the government and support Work for the Dole.

National Security

Mr ANDREN (3.06 pm)—My question is to the Attorney-General. To what degree will the good faith defence in proposed antiterrorism bills protect journalists, editors and producers in this country from facing charges under amended laws of sedition or other provisions? Could, for instance, the reporting of the ASIO raid on Mr Bilal Daye, as reported in the Fairfax press, lead to the charging of the reporter had it occurred after these laws were passed?

Mr RUDDOCK—The question, in a sense, is hypothetical at the moment. There is legislation that is being proposed. It is the subject of ongoing discussions at the moment. When we have it, we will be in a better position to consider the implications. But I simply make the point that I do not propose to speculate about the way in which particular matters that are described as factual situa-
Workplace Relations

Mr VASTA (3.08 pm)—My question is addressed to the Minister for Small Business and Tourism. Is the minister aware of the difficulties that Australian small business face under the existing workplace relations system? Are there any alternatives?

FRAN BAILEY—I thank the member for Bonner for his question and I applaud his very strong support for small business. I can advise the member for Bonner and all members here that in fact small business has many difficulties to contend with because it must navigate its way through 130 different pieces of legislation, 4,000 awards and six different workplace systems right across the country. That means that small business has to contend with spending a lot more time than it needs to and a lot more money than it needs to and, importantly, that means a loss of jobs. Let me refer members to one award included in that maze: the Traffic Operating, Workshops and Miscellaneous Grades Award. It states, ‘Suitable watches provided for use in connection with the performance of duties shall be supplied and kept in repair.’ I have to tell you that I have heard of workers getting a watch on retirement, but this must be the only job where the boss must give you a watch on your first day on the job and then make sure that it is repaired during your life of employment in that job.

The government’s workplace relations reforms will ensure that small business does not have to contend with that maze of awards. The government’s workplace relations reforms will ensure that it will be easier and simpler for small business and it will be much more flexible. It means that small business will have the time to get on with doing the job that it is meant to be doing: doing business and growing its business. It will actually be able to employ more people. Red tape will be reduced, duplication will be avoided, and all of this will be of direct benefit to small business.

I am asked whether there are any alternatives. I have to say to that, sadly, there are not. The Labor opposition has no appetite for reform; it has no energy and no commitment to reform. Let me refer the House to the recent so-called Labor Business Forum, where the Leader of the Opposition could not even bring himself to mention small business. Small business in this country knows that it is only this government that understands the needs of small business and it is only this government that is committed to reforming workplace relations for small business.

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

MR NGUYEN TUONG VAN

Mr BEAZLEY (Brand—Leader of the Opposition) (3.12 pm)—by leave—I move:

(1) That the Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia calls upon the Government of the Republic of Singapore to spare the life of Mr Nguyen Tuong Van, an Australian citizen who has been convicted of a capital offence in the Republic of Singapore.

(2) That this Parliament’s request to the Government of the Republic of Singapore is mindful of the following:

(a) the provisions of the Singapore Constitution which provide for acts of mercy in such cases;

(b) the fact that Mr Nguyen has cooperated fully with the Singapore authorities and the Australian Federal Police authorities concerning all relevant matters relating to his conviction; and

(c) certain mitigating personal circumstances surrounding Mr Nguyen.

(3) This Parliament requests the Speaker of the House of Representatives to convey this motion to the Speaker of the Parliament of the
Republic of Singapore and for the Prime Minister to convey this motion to the Government of the Republic of Singapore.

I thank the government, as well as the House, for allowing me to move this motion and I anticipate that the government will support it. In my remarks, I want to pay tribute to the fact that ministers and the Prime Minister have worked hard on this issue over what now seems to be a very long period. We have joined them on occasions where we could when we have visited Singapore and met with ministers. I know that the shadow minister for foreign affairs has repeatedly made efforts in this regard and has himself actively communicated with the legal representatives of the family concerned.

This is a terribly sad case. The only people who will benefit from the death of this poor young man will be those who have exploited him so miserably for their financial gain—evil traffickers who profit from the misery of others. With the death of this young Australian—should that occur—there is every likelihood that their criminal activities will go unpunished. We acknowledge that drug trafficking is a serious offence and we accept that the Singaporean government has the right and responsibility to protect its people and administer its laws. The relationship between our two countries is important. Mr Nguyen Tuong Van’s cooperation with the authorities in relation to drug traffickers who move heroin throughout South-East Asia is of benefit to both Singapore and Australia.

There is a groundswell of Australian public opinion that finds it difficult to accept the severity of the sentence for Mr Nguyen’s offence. The facts are: he is 24 years old with no prior convictions; he has already served more than two years in prison and has been on death row for 12 months; he has never denied his guilt; he admitted his crime immediately; he was a courier only, caught in an amateurish attempt to bring 400 grams of heroin back to Australia; he has helped the AFP for the last two years; and investigations are continuing into the masterminds behind his criminal activity. This is of course an operational matter and cannot be publicly analysed, but let me repeat that Mr Nguyen has cooperated fully with the police, providing details about those who recruited him and organised his trip in December 2002.

Mr Nguyen’s contrition and willingness to help police triggers article 22P of the Singapore Constitution, which allows the granting of mercy where the accused has admitted guilt and cooperated with the authorities. If granted a reprieve, the alternative penalty of 20 years imprisonment is obviously substantial. He is remorseful; he is sorry. The main reason he committed the crime was to pay off his twin brother’s debts. Like many refugees, his life has been a struggle. His mother fled Vietnam by boat, arriving in a Thai refugee camp with her newborn twin sons. After settling in Australia, she learned English, learned a trade and brought up her sons single-handedly. Her son Van did well at school, played sport, worked at night to help support the family and began tertiary studies in business. His lawyers maintain that their client had drifted into bad company and that, until then, he had been a model son and student.

I call upon the parliament to lend its weight to the campaign to save the young man—a young man who has undoubtedly made a serious mistake but does not deserve to die for it, a young man whose family is suffering the unbearable anguish of the prospect of their son and brother going to the gallows. There has already been a concerted campaign through diplomatic channels, and I pay tribute again to the representations made by the Prime Minister and the Minister for Foreign Affairs, who have appealed directly to the Singapore government. Appeals for clemency have also been made by the Governor-General, church leaders, members of
parliament on both sides of the House and advocacy groups. Most heartbreaking have been the calls for mercy from the young Australian’s mother—a grief and sorrow shared by all of us who are parents—and his loyal, loving friends fighting to save the life of their old schoolmate. I am asking parliament today to support them; I am sure that parliament will. I end where I started off: by thanking the government for making time available for this motion.

The SPEAKER—Is the motion seconded?

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

Mr DOWNER (Mayo—Minister for Foreign Affairs) (3.17 pm)—Can I just say that I support the motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition, and I appreciate his initiative in doing so. The government deeply regrets the President of Singapore’s rejection of Nguyen’s appeal for clemency. We of course must respect the decisions of the Singapore government and constitution, and this decision was made according to the due processes of Singapore law. While the Australian government has always taken a strong stand against drug trafficking, we have argued strongly that there are compelling compassionate circumstances in this case to justify clemency. Let me make it clear that I always oppose capital punishment.

We have emphasised to the Singapore government that this is a young man. His personal history and family circumstances are very difficult and very sad. He and his brother were born, as the Leader of the Opposition has said, in a refugee camp in Thailand, and their father abandoned them. Despite this unpromising start, Mr Nguyen completed secondary school and was on the student representative council. He was a patrol leader in the Boy Scouts and was involved in community fundraising. He is in this situation because he wanted to help his brother to pay off some large legal debts. He has no previous criminal record. Prior to this tragic error, he worked for three years in an attempt to pay off his brother’s debts. He has shown considerable remorse since his arrest. Let me also say that Mr Nguyen has cooperated fully and willingly with the police services of both Australia and Singapore, and the information that he has provided has assisted police investigations in Australia into drug trafficking syndicates. We have made the point to the Singaporean government that Mr Nguyen’s execution would close off forever a potentially important source of testimony, should any further investigation lead to prosecutions.

I can assure the parliament that the government will continue to do everything we can to plead the special circumstances of Mr Nguyen’s case with the Singapore government in the hope of preventing his execution. Following the rejection of the clemency appeal, which I received from the Singapore Minister for Foreign Affairs the Friday before last, I wrote again to foreign affairs minister George Yeo to underline the government’s strong desire to see this young Australian’s life spared. The Prime Minister and I are also meeting Mr Nguyen’s Melbourne barrister, Lex Lasry, this afternoon to discuss whether there are any other avenues the government might usefully pursue. Reflecting the depth of our conviction that his sentence should be commuted, the government has raised Mr Nguyen’s case at every level of the Singapore government at every opportunity we thought it appropriate and where we thought it would make a difference, emphasising the compelling reasons for clemency.

This campaign actually goes back quite some time. Mr Nguyen’s case was raised with the Singapore President, SR Nathan, during his visit to Australia from 14 to 18 March this year by the Governor-General,
the Prime Minister and me and by letter from the Governor-General in December 2004. It has been raised with Singapore Prime Minister Lee by written personal appeal for clemency from the Prime Minister on 17 May, by the Prime Minister during a visit to Singapore on 1 February, where he also raised it with the Senior Minister, Mr Goh, and by the Prime Minister also in November last year at the APEC meeting in Santiago, Chile.

It has been raised with Singapore’s Minister for Foreign Affairs, George Yeo, by me as recently as during the Singapore-Australia Joint Ministerial Commission meeting on 22 and 23 August in Perth, by me in writing on a number of occasions—and I have referred to the most recent of those letters—by me at the APEC meeting last November and on earlier occasions by me to Mr Yeo’s predecessor, Professor Jayakumar. It has been raised with Singapore’s Minister for Trade and Industry, Mr Lim, and the Minister for Information, Communications and the Arts, Mr Lee, by Mr Vaile, with other senior Singaporean ministers by Mr Rudd when he visited Singapore in April, with Singapore’s Senior Minister of State, Ho Peng Kee, by Senator Ellison on 24 April, and with the home affairs minister by senior DFAT officials during his visit to Canberra on 5 May. I could go on. For instance, Daryl Williams, when he was Attorney-General, raised the matter with the then Minister for Foreign Affairs, Professor Jayakumar.

The reason I mention all of these representations—and it is rather a long list—is that we have made an enormous effort on behalf of Mr Nguyen, and it pains me above all that it is proving extraordinarily difficult to win a reprieve for him. It has proved enormously difficult. Despite all our best efforts, still we have been unsuccessful. From time to time, so as to ensure the public are in no way misled about this, I have said that we remain pessimistic about our prospects of persuading the Singapore President to grant clemency, but we will continue to try.

I want to take this opportunity to thank the Australian parliamentary delegation which was in Singapore very recently—in fact, on the day Mr Nguyen’s appeal for clemency was rejected. The delegation was led by the member for Pearce and I think the deputy leader was the member for Fowler. The members for Riverina and Canberra were also part of the delegation. I know they were very distressed to hear the news. I appreciate all the communications from the delegation to me in my office in Adelaide, which is where I was at the time. In their bilateral meetings with their Singapore counterparts and with others, they did a very good job of expressing Australia’s remorse about this decision. The measured tone in which this parliamentary delegation acted is consistent with the way in which other members of parliament, both government and opposition, have conducted themselves, and I really would like to thank them.

A couple of journalists—Geoffrey Barker and Mark Baker in the Fairfax press—have suggested that we should bring our relationship with Singapore to the ground over this issue and tear up commercial, military and political agreements with them. It would not help. If anything, it would only make matters worse. We need to understand that. Nguyen would still be hanged and we, of course, would be left with the consequences of our own actions. I think the way that the government, the opposition, members of parliament generally and others have handled this has been the best we could possibly do in the circumstances. I appreciate the Leader of the Opposition’s initiative in moving this motion. If we can transmit the motion, passed by the parliament, to Singapore, it will help as part of the general armoury we have in trying to save this poor young man’s life. We
all know he has done the wrong thing in trafficking drugs—we all understand that—but we dearly hope and pray that his life can be saved.

Mr Rudd (Griffith) (3.25 pm)—The reason we are speaking to this motion today in the parliament is that we hold one fundamental human value to be true, and that is the intrinsic dignity of all human life. It is for this reason that we oppose all forms of capital punishment. That is the formal policy position of the Australian Labor Party; it is the formal policy position of the Liberal Party of Australia. For our policy to be credible, we must apply it universally. We must be credible in our opposition to capital punishment as a matter of policy wherever it occurs, whether in the United States, China or Singapore. When it comes to capital punishment sentences applied to Australian citizens, we must also make representations on behalf of all Australians who find themselves in this situation. Based on the advice that I have, this has been precisely the approach adopted by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Downer, in relation to cases which have come up in South-East Asia during his period as minister.

This brings us to the tragic case of this young Australian citizen, Nguyen Tuong Van, who is on death row in Singapore at present. Trafficking in narcotics is an obscenity; the execution of a young man by hanging is an equal obscenity. Does one obscenity justify the other? No, it does not.

In the period leading up the Singapore President’s refusal to grant clemency to this young Australian, the Australian government has made multiple representations to the Singapore authorities. We on our side of politics appreciate that fact. Representations have been made by His Excellency the Governor-General, by the Prime Minister, by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, by multiple other ministers and members of parliament and by our high commissioners in Singapore over that period, including most recently Gary Quinlan.

We have done the same on our side of politics. Twelve months ago, on behalf of the federal parliamentary Labor Party, I wrote to the President of Singapore, a letter conveyed through the offices of Mr Downer. Attached to the letter was a petition on behalf of every member of the Australian parliamentary Labor Party which sought the President to exercise an act of clemency in relation to Mr Nguyen. It was also copied to the foreign affairs minister of Singapore, Mr George Yeo. Apart from these representations, on multiple occasions through my dealings with the Singapore high commissioner we on our side of politics have made plain our views on this matter—that we seek clemency for this young man.

Beyond these political representations, we have also had representations from other members of the community, including Cardinal Pell on behalf of the Catholic Church, other church leaders and other church and community organisations. I have also received multiple representations from Anna Burke, the federal member for Chisholm, on behalf of Mr Nguyen’s mother, who is a constituent of Anna’s. Anna Burke has consistently made plain to me, to members of the parliamentary Labor Party and to the government the interests which need to be reflected to the authorities on behalf of Mrs Nguyen’s son. We have done all of this in close cooperation with Mr Nguyen’s lawyers and we have done so quietly and diplomatically—that has been on the best advice of Mr Nguyen’s lawyers. That was until the decision taken recently by the Singapore President to decline our collective request for clemency.
That phase has now passed. The only option available to us—which is why we are participating in this debate today—is to make a direct appeal to the government and parliament of Singapore through the vehicle of this parliament. We must directly, publicly and in a forthright manner tell the Singaporean government and parliament why we believe this young man's life should be spared. In support of this, together with the Minister for Foreign Affairs I have written to the Singaporean foreign minister, George Yeo. I have also spoken in the most direct terms possible to the Singaporean High Commissioner to Australia, Joseph Koh, drawing in part on the substantial breadth and depth of the Australia-Singapore bilateral relationship. I have no complaint about the actions taken by the government in support of these initiatives. Community organisations are renewing their appeals as well.

If we go to the substance of the motion before the parliament, it is framed this way because of the particular provisions of the Singaporean constitution. Section 22P of the Singaporean constitution says:

22P—(1) The President, as occasion shall arise, may, on the advice of the Cabinet—

(a) grant a pardon to any accomplice in any offence who gives information which leads to the conviction of the principal offender or any one of the principal offenders, if more than one;

(b) grant to any offender convicted of any offence in any court in Singapore, a pardon, free or subject to lawful conditions, or any reprieve or respite, either indefinite or for such period as the President may think fit, of the execution of any sentence pronounced on such offender; or

(c) remit the whole or any part of such sentence or of any penalty or forfeiture imposed by law.

The reason we have framed this motion in these terms is to capture the provisions of section 22P of the Singaporean constitution. The Leader of the Opposition has already made mention of the fact that Mr Nguyen has been complete in his cooperation not just with the police authorities in Singapore but also with the Australian Federal Police. He has provided, based on our advice, much useful information, and there remain, based on our advice, investigations on foot where, we believe, his evidence may in fact be of crucial relevance. For these reasons, we believe that the provisions outlined in section 22P of the Singaporean constitution are, in effect, well met.

Furthermore, the motion has been framed in terms of the personal circumstances surrounding Mr Nguyen. As others have already said in the debate on this motion, Mr Nguyen came to this country as the twin son of a mother who was a refugee from South-East Asia who arrived in the poorest and most dismal of circumstances. When Mr Nguyen was a young boy, he was a member of the Vietnamese Boy Scouts. He committed this offence as a 21- or 22-year-old on his first ever visit abroad. He did so in a most naive fashion. The offence he committed was, of course, grave, but it is an offence which in our collective and considered view does not under any circumstances warrant capital punishment.

Therefore, we take the opportunity today in the debate in the parliament on this critical motion to directly remind our friends in Singapore of the depth and breadth of the Australia-Singapore bilateral relationship. Together with the Minister for Foreign Affairs, I am surprised and disappointed—and, personally, dumbfounded—at the extent to which Singapore has rejected the request that we have made, on a bipartisan basis, concerning this young man’s life. I repeat the appeals which have been made on behalf of Mr Nguyen. This is a young life. He is a young person who has made a grave mistake,
but it is a mistake for which he should not pay with his own life through death by hanging. Our appeal therefore remains to the government, the parliament and the people of Singapore to consider this decision again and grant this young man clemency.

Mrs MOYLAN (Pearce) (3.34 pm)—It is certainly with a heavy heart that I rise to speak in support of this motion today. I had prepared a motion for the House, which I delivered to the Speaker this morning. That motion arose because I led a delegation to Singapore which included three other women. It was an all-woman delegation, I am pleased to say—a first for the Australian parliament. It included the member for Fowler, who was the deputy leader, the member for Riverina and the member for Canberra. On the very day we arrived, we heard that the Singaporean Prime Minister and cabinet had rejected our Prime Minister’s plea for clemency on behalf of Mr Nguyen Tuong Van. I must say that I deeply appreciated—as did other members of the delegation—the tremendous assistance provided to our delegation by our high commissioner to Singapore, His Excellency Miles Cooper, and his staff. They gave us an excellent briefing. I also pay tribute to them for the assistance they have given and care they have shown to Mr Nguyen and, in particular, to his mother.

Through the high commissioner, we were able to arrange meetings at quite a high level. We met many senior members of the Singaporean parliament and we all spoke in support of Prime Minister Howard’s plea for clemency. We spoke directly to the Speaker of the Parliament of Singapore, Mr Abdullah Tarmugi; to Dr Ong Chit Chung and some of his colleagues, who form the Singapore-Australia friendship group; to Mr Raymond Lim, who is the minister for the Prime Minister’s office, Second Minister for Foreign Affairs and Second Minister for Finance; and to the Minister for Defence, Mr Teo Chee Hean.

I would like to pay tribute to my colleagues on that delegation for joining with me in a heartfelt plea for clemency. Each member of the delegation spoke respectfully, strongly and from the heart in a request for mercy on behalf of Mr Nguyen. We followed up our personal meetings and representations with a letter to the Singaporean Prime Minister, Mr Lee, who was not in Singapore during our stay but was visiting China. I would like to quote from that letter, which was compiled jointly by the delegation. We said:

We understand the concerns of the Singapore Government and people in regard to the impact of drugs on the community and the reasons for the strict policy prohibiting drug use and trafficking. We acknowledge that due process has been adhered to in the case of Mr Nguyen.

However, we are a delegation of women, concerned that one serious mistake by this young man, not for his own benefit but for that of a family member, will result in the loss of his life if Singapore proceeds with this sentence.

We know that your Government is committed to even-handed treatment in these cases and must face domestic criticism if exceptions are made. Notwithstanding this, we believe that there is a strong case for clemency in the case of Mr Nguyen.

We all have families and know that despite our best efforts, poor judgements are exercised sometimes, due to a lack of maturity and experience.

We believe this to be the case with Mr Nguyen. The letter continued:

As senior members of our Parliament we respectfully plea with you to spare the life of this young Australian, Mr Nguyen Tuong Van, on this occasion.

We all agreed that it was important to stress that Australia and Singapore have developed very close ties at a person-to-person level and strong cooperation, particularly on re-
gional security, at government-to-government levels. I support what Minister Downer just said: it is unhelpful to try to create a problem between Singapore and Australia, because this relationship is very strong. Two events during our visit demonstrated the strength of our relationship.

We were privileged to visit the Battle Box where joint commanders, including Australian commander General Percival, made strategic decisions in the midst of Japan’s attack on Singapore in the 1940s, during the Second World War. We also visited the chapel and the Changi Museum. You could not leave those places without a deep sense of our shared history and of how compassion and kindness were abundant between the Singaporeans, our soldiers and other members of the allied forces who were caught up in those terrible events. The human spirit transcended the dreadful atrocities and the deprivation suffered by Singaporeans and Australians alike. In the joint effort to save Singapore, acts of kindness were myriad.

The second event that touched our delegation very deeply was a visit to two of the remaining Australians injured in the recent Bali bombing. They received treatment at the Mount Elizabeth Hospital in Singapore. One is still in hospital after suffering serious life-threatening injuries but is making good progress. During our visit to the hospital, we were touched by the wonderful care and the kindness shown to the Bali victims by the staff and other Singaporeans. These events serve to forge strong bonds between our people and our countries.

As do many countries in the region, we also share the scourge of illicit drug trafficking, the use of drugs and the serious and devastating impacts that that has on individuals and families within our communities. It is acknowledged that Singapore is particularly vulnerable, given its geographical location. Nevertheless, and despite all of this, the constitution of Singapore does provide for clemency to be shown. From our meeting with one of the ministers in Singapore, we understand that the ability to show clemency has been invoked in other capital offences. We believe that there are mitigating circumstances in this case. I think most people in this parliament would join me in recognising that Mr Nguyen’s case warrants consideration of clemency. It will be a great tragedy if this young Australian should lose his life in this way.

We pay tribute to the efforts of the Prime Minister, senior members, ministers and shadow ministers on both sides of this House. We pay tribute to the Governor-General, the leaders in the community and the many Australians who have done a great deal in calling for clemency for Mr Nguyen—for forgiveness and mercy to be shown to him. I think everything possible has been done by our government and others to save the life of this young man. I know that there is barely a glimmer of hope. The laws in Singapore are very strict, but I do not think that should deter us from continuing to redouble our efforts while there is still a chance—and there is a chance. We should be optimistic and no effort should be spared to save the life of this young Australian. As I said, young people sometimes make very silly decisions and, under the circumstances, it would be a great tragedy if this young person should lose his life.

Ms BURKE (Chisholm) (3.43 pm)—I raised the matter of Mr Nguyen, a constituent of mine, in the House way back in March 2004. However, some of us were approached by Mr Nguyen’s lawyers to keep our efforts quiet and so I take offence at criticisms that we have not been doing enough. Many of us have been doing an enormous amount behind the scenes. As we all know, Singapore has its right as a nation to its laws. Most of us in
this House disagree strongly with their stance, but we respect their right as a sovereign nation so we have kept our silence; we have kept our counsel. But now the lawyers and others are telling us to speak out. I want to thank everybody for doing that.

At the time of my original speech on this matter, I quoted a letter by Mr Nguyen’s mother, who wrote:

For my part I feel more frightened than anything. I know that my son is very sincere and he is still very immature. He does not have enough knowledge to face real life. He does not know how to tackle difficulties of society and people around him.

Now Van is trapped into the danger of life. The suffering and mistakes that were created in his life are partly my fault. I wanted my two children to have good education and good shelter, therefore I have tried to work hard. In looking after my children I feel that I did not give them good parenting, to lead them to live a good life and to guide them from the teenage years to adulthood. I feel ashamed of what happened to my son and my family.

I ask for your kind consideration of my son’s case. I beg that he be given the opportunity to change so that he can make a good start in life. While he has been in the correctional center he has learnt a lot and changed to become a good person. I beg for your mercy so that I can be reunited with my son.

As I said in my original speech:

I call upon the Singaporean government to show clemency in this case and to return this silly boy to his mother—yes, to punish him for his crime, but not by the death sentence.

Mr TUCKEY (O’Connor) (3.45 pm)—I was not aware that it was the intention of the opposition to bring this matter before the House today but, as they have done so, I respect their right to do so. I am not prepared to not say things in this House that I have already said publicly. I am quite concerned that we as a sovereign parliament should continue to apply pressure, as has just been said, at the behest of certain legal representatives—I have seen them on television—to another sovereign parliament to say that they should give special consideration to an individual; namely, an Australian. I doubt sincerely that we would be going through this process on behalf of a person of another nation, one of the many hundreds who have been executed in Singapore, as a result of this. My view is that it is not appropriate for the parliament to further pressure the parliament of Singapore.

Mrs Irwin—How about the letter you sent for your son to get him off a fine?

The SPEAKER—Order! The member for Fowler is reminded that all others have been heard in silence. The member for O’Connor has the call.

Mr TUCKEY—So my first point that I would like to put to this parliament, as I have done publicly, is that we would make Australian couriers the most treasured commodity of the international drug trade if we were successful in this proposition.

Opposition members interjecting—

Mr TUCKEY—Yes, I am sorry, but someone else started it and I will complete it, Mr Whip. My second objection is that we are being called upon to show sympathy in this House when the young man concerned was found with an old-fashioned pound weight of no doubt high-grade heroin and had no sympathy for the young people who were going to consume that product, possibly resulting in their deaths. Please remember that this was in 2002, when young people were dying at a very considerable rate from overdosing on the quality of heroin that was being brought into this country at the time. My third point is to make an issue of the total drug trade.

Ms Roxon—You tried to get your son off a parking fine; it’s a disgrace.
The SPEAKER—Order!

Mr TUCKEY—It was said that I should listen to what everyone had to say. I am not unknown for making interjections. I did not do it. If you can’t keep this debate on a sensible level, then we will have a division.

The point I wish to make, finally, is the other point I have made, and which came as a horrible shock to me, in very recent times. We have a new demographic of dementia patients in Australia. Whilst the truly elderly are getting older before, fortunately, this terrible affliction strikes them, we now have people in their late 40s and early 50s moving into aged persons homes because they have fried their brains with the sorts of drugs that this man was trying to bring into our country. Consequently, I cannot support this motion.

The SPEAKER—The question is that the motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition be agreed to. All those of that opinion say aye; I think the ayes have it.

Mr Tuckey—I ask that my name be recorded as the sole objector to this motion.

The SPEAKER—the member can have his name recorded. The question is therefore resolved in the affirmative, and I add that as Speaker I will willingly convey the sentiments I have been asked to convey.

Question agreed to.

QUESTIONS TO THE SPEAKER
Questions in Writing

Mr KELVIN THOMSON (3.49 pm)—Mr Speaker, under standing order 105(b), I ask that you write to ministers, seeking reasons for the delay in answering the following questions: No. 186, to the Minister for Finance and Administration, concerning the Commonwealth Superannuation Scheme; No. 311, to the Treasurer, regarding our trade imbalance; Nos 810 to 812, to the Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs, regarding appointments to migrant resource centres; No. 1673, to the Prime Minister, regarding the Wimmera Mallee pipeline project; Nos 1958 to 1976, to various ministers, regarding the cost of recruiting staff; No. 1984, to the Treasurer, regarding the Charter of Budget Honesty; and No. 1985, to the Minister for Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs, regarding departmental conduct in the case of Chen Yonglin.

The SPEAKER—I thank the member for Wills, and I will follow up his request.

PETITIONS

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

Dental Care

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

This petition of certain citizens of Australia draws to the attention of the House, the long dental waiting lists and under funding of our public dental system.

Your Petitioners therefore ask the House to:

• Re-introduce the Commonwealth Dental Scheme and restore funding to public dental health,
• Reduce waiting times for public dental health services, and

Train more public dentists.

by Ms Corcoran (from 12 citizens),
Ms Gillard (from 1,060 citizens) and
Ms Vamvakinou (from 356 citizens)

Dental Care

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

We the undersigned request that the Government take action to improve our health system by re-introducing the Commonwealth Dental Scheme.

The axing of the Commonwealth Dental Scheme was a direct result of a Howard Government decision and has caused great hardship to many local
residents on low incomes particularly the elderly and those with young children.

Your petitioners therefore respectfully request that the House do everything in their power to reintroduce the Commonwealth Dental Scheme as a matter of urgency.

by Ms Hall (from 338 citizens)

Immigration: Asylum Seekers

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

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

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

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

We, therefore, the individual, undersigned attendees at All Saints’ Anglican Church, Barwon Heads VIC 3227, petition the House of Representatives in support of the above mentioned Motion.

AND we, as in duty bound will ever pray.

by Mr McArthur (from 39 citizens)

Immigration: Asylum Seekers

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

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

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

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

We, therefore, the individual, undersigned attendees at All Saints’ Anglican Church, Selby VIC 3154, petition the House of Representatives in support of the above mentioned Motion.

AND we, as in duty bound will ever pray.

by Mr Wood (from 11 citizens)

International Transfers

To the Honourable Speaker and the Members of the House of Representatives assembled in Parliament.
This petition of citizens of Australia, calls on the Parliament to recognize

1. That Australian Citizen Kirk Pinner, was extradited by the Australian Government, from Australia (Tasmania) to the United States of America (Idaho) in May 2003. That Kirk Pinner’s April 2004 application to return to Australia, via the International Transfer of Prisoners Scheme was denied by the American Government in February 2005.

2. That the Australian Government disclosed confidential and private communications provided to the Government by Kirk Pinner & Tracy Anderson during extradition proceedings, without their consent, to the American prosecution.

3. That while incarcerated in the American state of Idaho, Kirk Pinner suffered with severe ill-health including repeated bouts of Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (CFS) and contracted inactive Tuberculosis (TB). Both the Idaho jail authorities and Australian Government denied Kirk Pinner’s requests for medical assistance.

4. That Kirk Pinner’s court appointed lawyer was ineffective, non-compliant and negligent in his duties, which was conveyed to the Australian Government. Despite this the Australian Government denied the repeated requests from Kirk Pinner and his family for legal and financial assistance, which contradicts assistance provided to other Australian Citizens overseas in legal difficulties and Government policy.

5. That the Australian Government continues to ignore letters from Kirk Pinner spanning the past 2 years. Such letters as to Justice Minister Chris Ellison of September 9 and December 4 2003 and the Attorney General Department dated January 24 2005.

Your petitioners therefore ask the House to seek a full explanation on behalf of Kirk Pinner and to provide him answers as to why: political pressure was not placed upon the American Government to have Kirk Transferred home to Tasmania, especially given the fact he was Extradited to America; why the Australian Government disclosed confidential and private communications to the American prosecution; why the Australian Government refused to provide medical, financial and legal assistance to Kirk; and why letters to the Australian Government from Kirk Pinner have been continually ignored.

by Mr Baker (from 280 citizens)

International Transfers

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

This petition of citizens of Australia, calls on the Parliament to recognize

1. The prison and court systems in the United States of America are inhumane and corrupt systems, which Australian Citizens require the protection from.

2. That Australian Citizen Kirk Pinner, was extradited by the Australian Government, from Australia (Tasmania) to the United States of America (Idaho) in May 2003. That Kirk Pinner’s application to return to Australia, via the International Transfer of Prisoners Scheme was denied by the American Government in February 2005.

3. The Extradition and Transfer relationship between Australia and United States of America is clearly to Australia’s detriment and America’s benefit.

Your petitioners therefore ask the House to seek that Australia should no longer participate in the Treaty on Extradition with the United States of America. Australia should withdraw from this Treaty immediately. With all current requests for the Extradition of Australian Citizens to the United States of America being denied. That Australia should no longer participate in the Transfer of Prisoners with the United States of America under the International Transfer of Prisoners Scheme. With the only exception being, such exchange of Prisoners is done on a 1 for 1 basis, and all Australians currently imprisoned in the United States of America requesting to be Transferred home are done so immediately.

by Mr Baker (from 271 citizens)
**Therapeutic Goods Administration**

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

The petition of certain: Residents of Australia.

Draws to the attention of the House, (or points out to the House)

Through its various committees the TGA instigated many amendments to the Therapeutic Goods Act including the Therapeutic Goods Amendment Bill of 2005 which proposes a set of additional criminal actions against supplement manufacturers, importers and practitioners using supplements.

The trans-Tasman Agency, if implemented, will be operating in an international jurisdiction and mindful of the world trade organisation agreements. CODEX operates in an international jurisdiction in full accord with world trade organisation agreements. WTO agreements are intended to create a “level playing field”. This has already facilitated the monopoly of multinational drug companies into the national marketplace and threatened the supplement industry.

These steps, if implemented are set to severely restrict the manufacture, import, availability, and dosage determining their upper “allowable” limits of supplements available to Australians. As a voter I insist on upholding my right to choose the health remedy of my choice.

Your Petitioners ask/request that the House should: (State the action desired)

1. Vote NO to passing the Therapeutic Goods Amendment Bill of 2005
2. Vote NO to passing any implementing Legislation that would give effect to the JTA Treaty and the Trans Tasman Agency at any time before or after July 1, 2005.
3. Permanently recall all delegates from the CODEX Alimentarius Commission Committee on Nutrition and foods for special dietary uses.
4. Call for a Parliamentary Inquiry investigating TGA corruption arising from improper influences on policy by multinational drug corporate interests.

by Ms Corcoran (from eight citizens)

**Diabetes**

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

The northern areas of South Australia is home to a large number of people that suffer from Diabetes. (Gawler through to the Barossa Valley, Clare Valley, Mid North, Yorke Peninsula, Virginia and Two Wells areas). Many of these people use the town of Gawler as a regional services hub. We believe there is sufficient demand from these people to justify the establishment of an additional diabetes products supply outlet in the outer metropolitan area to the north of Adelaide.

The Petition of the undersigned electors request that approval be given for the establishment of an additional agent / outlet of ‘Diabetes South Australia’ under the National Diabetes Supply Scheme in the Gawler area of South Australia.

by Mr Fawcett (from 2,861 citizens)

**In-Vitro Fertilisation**

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

The petition of certain citizens of Australia draws to the attention of the House, the significance of IVF in our community, the opportunity that IVF offers to couples who would otherwise never have a family, and that 1 in every 35 babies born in Australia are as a result of IVF treatment.

Your petitioners therefore ask the House to ensure no changes are made to current Medicare funding of IVF treatments as proposed by the Howard Government.

by Ms Gillard (from 785 citizens)

**Health and Ageing: Aged Care**

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

Request that the House take immediate action to address the chronic shortage of residential aged care beds and Community Aged Care Packages (CACP) in the Hunter and Central Coast.
We further request that immediate action is taken to address the crisis in capital and recurrent funding, the crisis in wages and conditions of staff working in the aged care industry and that red tape and the current bureaucratic nightmare be resolved.

by Ms Hall (from 16 citizens)

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

We the undersigned call on the Federal Government to preserve the basic rights of Australian workers, including a preservation of a basic minimum wage and award conditions and the retention of the Industrial Relations Commission. Australian workers should be protected against unfair dismissal and also have the right to reject AWA individual contracts and negotiate collectively with their employer.

Your petitioners therefore respectfully request that the House encourage employers to provide fair working conditions for their employees.

by Ms Hall (from 38 citizens)

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

We the undersigned call on the Federal Government to recognise the vital importance of the Aeropelican air service which operates out of Belmont in the electorate of Shortland and:

(1) note that there is no other commercial air service operating out of either Lake Macquarie or the Central Coast of New South Wales;

(2) recognise that Aeropelican is a vital regional infrastructure which provides essential public transport;

(3) note that air travel from Williamtown is not a viable option for people living in Lake Macquarie and on the Central Coast of New South Wales when they travel to Sydney, and that the closure of Aeropelican will increase the traffic on the F3 Freeway between Lake Macquarie and Sydney; and

(4) note the transfer of Aeropelican’s air service to Williamtown will result in staff losing their jobs. (Notice given 10 March 2005.)

by Ms Hall (from eight citizens)

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

We the undersigned request that the Government re-open a Medicare Office at Belmont as there is no Medicare Office between Charlestown and Lake Haven and there has been a drastic decline in the numbers of General Practitioners bulkbilling.

The closure of Belmont Medicare Office by the Howard Government has caused great hardship to many local residents particularly the elderly and those with young children.

Your petitioners therefore respectfully request that the House do everything in their power to ensure that Belmont Medicare Office is reopened as a matter of urgency.

by Ms Hall (from 104 citizens)

Private John Simpson Kirkpatrick
To the Honourable the Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives assembled in Parliament.

We the undersigned request that John Simpson Kirkpatrick, of Simpson and donkey fame be awarded the Victoria Cross for Australia. Under the Imperial Award system, the Victoria Cross was denied to Simpson as a result of some confusion in the original application. In 1915 John Monash (later General) recommended Simpson for the VC. In 1967 Lieutenant Casey who also witnessed Simpson’s work (later Gover-
nor General, Lord Casey) together with Prime Minister Holt and the Chief of the General Staff, Major General Brand (also a witness) recommended him for the VC. This was also denied. The British government claimed that a dangerous precedent would be set. Your petitioners request that the House of Representatives do everything in their power to honour integrity and wishes of these fine Australians and overturn the original decision not to award the VC to Simpson. Simpson is a symbol of the self-sacrifice, mateship and all those values that Anzacs now stand for and Australians treasure. By honouring him, we honour them all.

by Ms Hall (from 36 citizens)

Howard Government: Antiviolence Campaign

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

This petition of certain citizens of Australia, condemns the Howard Government for refusing to run the anti-violence campaign, “No Respect, No Relationship” that was designed to educate young people that violence in relationships is wrong and must be stopped.

Your petitioners ask the House to ensure that the Government releases the campaign material that was developed over the last 2 years, at a cost of millions of dollars to taxpayers so that it can be used by others in the community to send a strong message to young people.

Public money paid for the development and production of this campaign and we urge the House to demand its release for public use.

by Ms Hall (from 19 citizens)

Trade: Fur Imports

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

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

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

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

by Ms Hall (from 15 citizens)

Republic: Plebiscite

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

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

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

by Ms Hall (from 11 citizens)

Trade: Live Animal Exports

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

The petition of certain undersigned citizens of Australia draws to the attention of the House the extreme suffering caused to cattle, sheep and goats during their assembly, land transportation and loading in Australia, shipment overseas, and then unloading and local transportation, feed-lotting, handling, and finally slaughter, without pre-stunning in importing countries.

Further we ask the House to note that heat stress, disease, injury, inadequate facilities, inadequate supervision and care and incidents such as on board fires, ventilation breakdowns, storms and rejection of shipments contribute to the high death rates each year, e.g. 73,700 sheep and 2,238 cattle died on board export ships in 2002. During the incident with the Cormo Express, nearly 6,000
died. Many thousands more suffer cruel practices prior to scheduled slaughter.

Your petitioners therefore ask the House to ban the practice of the live export of animals. Supporters who sign this petition will receive one only letter from Animal Liberation NSW, updating the situation concerning Live Export.

by Dr Lawrence (from 4,185 citizens)

Workplace Relations

To the Hon Speaker of the House and Members of the House assembled in Parliament:
The petition of certain citizens of Australia draws the attention of the House to the fact that:
WE BELIEVE that Australians should have basic rights at work, including decent minimum wages and awards conditions, protection from unfair dismissal and the right to reject AWA individual contracts and negotiate collectively with their employer.

WE OPPOSE the Howard Government’s plans to:
• Remove employment conditions from awards.
• Change the way minimum wages are set to make them lower.
• Use individual contracts to undercut existing rights and conditions.
• Keep unions out of workplaces and reduce workers’ negotiating and bargaining rights.
• Abolish redundancy pay and protection from unfair dismissals for the 3 million people who work in small businesses.
• Reduce the powers of the independent Industrial Relations Commission to settle disputes and set fair minimum standards at work.
• Take away rights at with laws that unilaterally override and weaken State industrial relations systems, awards and agreements.

And we, your petitioners, ask the House to ensure that the Government upholds Australians’ rights at work and does not implement these plans that we oppose.

by Mr McArthur (from 594 citizens)

Workplace Relations

To the Honourable Speaker of the House and Members of the House assembled in Parliament:
The petition of certain citizens of Australia draws the attention of the House to the fact that Australian employees will be worse off as a result of the Howard Government’s proposed changes to the industrial relations system.

The petitioners call upon the Howard Government to adopt a plan to produce a fair industrial relations system based on fairness and the fundamental principles of minimum standards, wages and conditions; safety nets; an independent umpire; the right to associate; and the right to collectively bargain.

The Petitioners therefore ask the House to ensure that the Howard Government:
(1) Guarantees that no individual Australia employee will be worse off under proposed changes to the industrial relation system.
(2) Allows the National Minimum Wage to continue to be set annually by the independent umpire, the Australian Industrial Relations Commission.
(3) Guarantees that unfair dismissal law changes will not enable employers to unfairly sack employees.
(4) Ensures that workers have the right to reject individual contracts and bargain for decent wages and conditions collectively.
(5) Keeps in place safety nets for minimum wages and conditions.
(6) Adopt Federal Labor’s principles to produce a fair system based on the fundamental principles on minimum standards, wages and conditions; safety nets; an independent umpire; the right to associate; and the right to collectively bargain.

by Mr Price (from 472 citizens)

United Nations Convention on Refugees

To the Honourable Speaker and the Members of the House of Representatives assembled in the parliament:
The petition of certain citizens of Australia draws the attention of the House to our request for a REFERENDUM ON WHETHER OR NOT Aus-
Epilepsy

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

This petition of certain citizens of Australia draws to the attention of the House that there is a clear lack of priority action for the brain disorder known as epilepsy.

A total of 2% of the Australian population have epilepsy. Research has shown that those with epilepsy are less likely to be employed than the general public.

Taking this into account, people with epilepsy are more likely to request benefits from the Australian government through the Department of Families and Community Services.

Your Petitioners therefore pray that the House direct the Minister to make epilepsy a condition that, if found to be the cause of unemployment, the recipient is given priority in gaining a health care card and other associated benefits.

by Mr Randall (from 180 citizens)

Melbourne Cup

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

The citizens of Australia draw the attention of the House to the national significance of the Melbourne Cup.

It is more than just a horse race. It is the race that stops a nation. We should celebrate this momentous afternoon away from our sites and offices, to pay due respect to this proud Australian sporting tradition.

The undersigned request the House judge the national importance of this event and consider a declaration of significance to the Federation for this day marked by a national half-day holiday.

by Mr Rudd (from 2,258 citizens)

Horvath v Commonwealth Bank of Australia and Anor

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

This petition of Mr. Gabor Horvath of 10 Lesney Street Richmond, Melbourne of the State of Victoria Electoral Division of Melbourne (Vic) who is the plaintiff in Proceedings in the High Court of Australia between Horvath v Commonwealth Bank of Australia & Anor originated by Writ of Summons M2 of 2005.

Draws to the attention of the House: relating to Constitutional matters arising in High Court proceedings where under Section 78B Notice to the Attorneys-General of the Commonwealth been given but intervention been refused. Be this as it may, the critical fact in the present matter that the petitioner Mr. Gabor Horvath Senior on 5 January 2005 filed a writ of summons in the High Court of Australia No. M2 of 2005 naming Commonwealth Bank of Australia and Commonwealth of Australia defendants. In March 2005 Mr. Horvath commenced a proceedings in the Magistrates Court of Victoria against solicitor for the Commonwealth Bank of Australia and for the Australian Government Solicitor by Charge and Summons for offence of perjury, breach of section 24AA (1)(a)(i) of the Crimes Act 1914 Treachery by doing an act with intend to overthrow the Constitution of the Commonwealth by sabotage originated by Writ of Summons M2 of 2005 in the High Court of Australia, this proceedings have been taken over by the Director of Public Prosecution of the Commonwealth, who has indicated that he does not intend to proceed further with them. The petitioner commenced a proceeding, application for indictment under section 354 Crimes Act 1958 (State) in the Full Court of the Supreme Court of Victoria in the matter of the Proceed of Section 24AA(1)(a)(i) Crimes Act 1914 (Commonwealth) in the matter of Mr. Philip Ruddock Attorney-General for the Commonwealth of Australia.

The matter herebefore mentioned whole goes around at “Division 4-Contract of Minors” sections 49, 50and 51 of Supreme Court Act 1986 (VIC), that the Commonwealth Bank of Australia and the Commonwealth of Australia have refused
to recognize this act as ruled by section 118 Constitution and Clause 5 preamble and section 42; section 44(ii) Constitution, rules as follows:

s.118 Recognition of law etc. of State

(1) Full faith and credit shall be given, throughout the Commonwealth to the laws, the public Acts and records, and judicial proceedings of every State.

and Clause 5 preamble

(2) Operations of the Constitution and laws

(3) This Act, and all laws made by the Parliament of the Commonwealth under the Constitution, shall be binding on the courts, judges, and people of every State and of every part of the Commonwealth, notwithstanding—

and s.42 Oath or affirmation of allegiance

(4) Every Senator and every member of the House of Representatives shall before taking his seat make and subscribe before the Governor-General or some person authorized by him, an oath or affirmation of allegiance in the form set forth in the Schedule to this Constitution

and s. 44(ii) Disqualification

(5) Any person who:

(ii) in attainted of treason, or has been convicted and is under sentence, or subject to be sentenced, for any offence punishable under the law of the Commonwealth or of a State by imprisonment for one year or longer;

(6) shall be incapable of being chosen or of sitting as a senator or a member of the House of Representatives.

I Gabor Horvath the petitioner therefore pray that the House will be faithful and bear true allegiance to Her Majesty Queen II Elizabeth, as demanded by s.42 Constitution, and make a declaration, as ruled by s.44(ii) Constitution: that His Honour the Hon Philip Ruddock MP, Attorney General for the Commonwealth of Australia been declared by s.44(ii) Constitution shall be incapable of sitting or of being chosen as a member of the House of Representatives.

by Mr Tanner (from one citizen)

Pathology Services

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

The petition of the residents of Craigieburn and electors of the Federal Division of Calwell.

Draws to the attention of the House the changes of licensing requirements for pathology services. This change requires a sole pathology collector in a satellite centre to collect and/or service at least 50 clients per day. This new target number will result in the eventual closure of much valued collection centre due to the difficulty in one person reaching this impossible standard.

Your petitioners therefore request the House review the licensing requirements of pathology services because our community seriously lacks medical services and facilities. The potential closure would seriously affect the whole community of Craigieburn and the electorate of Calwell, as clients would be forced to travel to Broadmeadows for services.

by Ms Vanvakinou (from 405 citizens)

Petitions received.

PRIVATE MEMBERS’ BUSINESS

Homelessness

Mr BRENDAN O’CONNOR (Gorton) (3.55 pm)—I move:

That this House:

(1) notes:

(a) that in the last census, there were an estimated 100,000 homeless people in Australia; and

(b) the high social costs of homelessness; and

(2) recognises that:

(a) the reasons behind homelessness are complex and varied but that governments do have a role to play in ameliorating homelessness; and

(b) the joint Commonwealth/State funded Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) is an example of a vital service provided to the homeless and to those at risk of homelessness; and
(3) calls on the Federal Government to:

(a) promote awareness of the issue of homelessness among the public;
(b) develop strategies aimed at preventing homelessness;
(c) work co-operatively with other levels of government to reduce homelessness;
(d) increase funding for crisis accommodation and support; and
(e) set realistic targets for the reduction of homelessness.

When we think about homelessness we tend to think of men sleeping on park benches or in doorways. While this is the obvious and public face of homelessness, it shows only part of the story. There is a much larger and much less visible group of Australians who exist in temporary or emergency accommodation, like refugees, or who sleep at friends’ or relatives’ houses for short periods of time. At the time of the last census in 2001, it was estimated that on any given night almost 100,000 people were homeless. While there has been very little change in the numbers of homeless people over the last 20 years, the demographics have changed significantly. Twenty years ago, homelessness was a condition that predominantly afflicted single adult males. While they still represent the single largest group, homelessness now extends to other sectors of society. From the census, this among many things was clear: 42 per cent of homeless people were female, 10 per cent were under the age of 12, 36 per cent were aged between 12 and 24, and 23 per cent were families.

The changing demographics have forced governments to rethink their attitudes to homelessness, especially with regard to the increasing numbers of children now classified as homeless. No government can or should ignore the social costs of high levels of youth homelessness in particular. A young person who is homeless can well end up paying for this homelessness for the rest of their lives through the lack of educational and vocational opportunities, the disproportionate likelihood of ending up in prison or the greater chance of suffering mental health and/or physical health problems. It is therefore in the interests of all of us to do what we can to alleviate the scourge of homelessness in our society.

There are many and varied reasons why people end up homeless: domestic and family violence, eviction, relationship or family breakdown, and financial difficulty. Governments cannot hope to prevent all these causes of homelessness from occurring, but they certainly do have a role in the economic health of their citizens and the cost and availability of housing and housing services. As that cost has risen, at the same time a rising housing market has forced expansion into the outer reaches of cities such as Melbourne, where services for the disadvantaged are less well established.

The problem of homelessness in my electorate of Gorton will not be helped by the Howard government’s proposed welfare changes. Recent statistics calculated by the Australian Council of Social Service show that Gorton will have the second largest amount of people in Victoria adversely affected by the changes to the current welfare provisions. In fact, the Howard government’s extreme agenda of further marginalising the poor, through both the welfare changes and its industrial relations agenda, is likely to have a severe impact on homelessness in my electorate. Already under stress from its rapidly growing population, Gorton is at serious risk of being further marginalised. While the government will no doubt argue that these government policies will not contribute to homelessness, there should be no argument that governments do have a very important role in helping those who find themselves homeless. In the 1980s the Hawke govern-
ment established the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program, a joint Commonwealth-state funded program helping those who are homeless.

Earlier this year, I visited Good Shepherd Youth and Family Services in St Albans in my electorate and had the opportunity to see first-hand some of the good work it does in helping the homeless. It extends far beyond just providing emergency shelter. It includes various counselling services, including financial counselling. Good Shepherd manages the St Albans youth housing program. This program actually does provide some assistance to young people. While the program is an important part of the response to homelessness, it should not be seen as sufficient to resolve the broader issues. If the government used just a fraction of its IR propaganda advertising budget on raising community awareness of homelessness, that would be a very good start. Many homeless people deal with prejudice shown by estate agents, retailers, banks and government and private organisations. An awareness campaign of these issues would receive bipartisan support. It would be an appropriate way to spend government money and use government resources and it would contribute to dealing with the problem of homelessness.

The fact is that a real attack on homelessness must be accompanied by real increases in funding in appropriate areas. Commonwealth funding for public housing has declined by 30 per cent in real terms since 1996, which is placing more pressure on struggling crisis centres. A proper, coordinated approach does not cut funding to public housing if it wishes to deal with homelessness. A proper, coordinated approach to homelessness pays attention to the many sufferers of mental illness in our society. A proper, coordinated approach to homelessness does not kick single mums off welfare payments or force already struggling families into low-paid, insecure jobs. Finally, a proper, coordinated approach to homelessness sets realistic targets and develops ways to measure the success or otherwise of government policies. This government’s failure to articulate a goal of reducing homelessness is indicative of its attitude.

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

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

Debate interrupted.

PERSONAL EXPLANATIONS

Mr HOCKEY (North Sydney—Minister for Human Services) (4.01 pm)—Mr Deputy Speaker, I wish to make a personal explanation.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Jenkins)—Does the honourable member claim to have been misrepresented?

Mr HOCKEY—I do.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER—The minister may proceed.

Mr HOCKEY—The Canberra Times on Saturday, 29 October 2005 had a headline ‘Respect decision to hang man: Hockey’. The article written by Mr Ross Peake, national affairs writer, went on to say: Australians should respect Singapore’s decision to execute a 25-year-old Melbourne man convicted of trafficking, federal Human Services Minister Joe Hockey said yesterday. This is completely wrong. I strongly oppose capital punishment and I would like it noted on the record that the Canberra Times have gone way too far on that.

PRIVATE MEMBERS’ BUSINESS

Homelessness

Debate resumed.

Mrs ELSON (Forde) (4.01 pm)—I am pleased to speak to this motion on homelessness moved by the honourable member for
Gorton. The more often we can raise the issue of homelessness and discuss ways of addressing it the better. As the member noted in his motion, the reasons behind homelessness are complex and varied, but all governments have a role to play in trying to help those who are homeless. I am very pleased to be part of a federal government that has taken positive steps to address homelessness.

Since we established the National Homelessness Strategy in 1999, there have been a number of approaches to integrating service delivery to homeless people. I am pleased that in this year’s budget we announced a further $10 million for the NHS. That is more than double the previous NHS funding. One of the innovative programs conducted under the National Homelessness Strategy was the Family Homelessness Prevention Pilot. This pilot began in 2001 as a three-year pilot program that worked with community organisations in each state to deliver prevention and early intervention strategies to families at risk of homelessness.

The Queensland program was run by Families Around Beenleigh, an organisation in my electorate. This local group does a tremendous job of helping people in need and works hard to achieve positive outcomes for local families. I want to thank Mr Kerry Clayton and his team at Families Around Beenleigh for the real difference that they have made to many local residents. Nationally, the program has incredible results. The final evaluation found that, after intervention, 98 per cent of families remained in their homes or were rehoused and 79 per cent of families addressed an immediate financial crisis, with 57 per cent of families fully achieving and a further 34 per cent partially achieving this goal. Adults in employment after intervention rose from 17 per cent to 26 per cent.

This prevention and early intervention program was such a success that it has evolved into the Household Organisational Management Expenses Advice Program, which our government provided $10.4 million for in last year’s budget. This means that, for a further four years, the group Families Around Beenleigh will continue to offer a range of support services for local families. They work closely with Centrelink’s social workers, from whom they get most referrals. Many of these families have rent in arrears or serious debt problems and they work with them to improve not just their finances but also their physical and mental health, family relationships and job prospects. It is a broad approach that seeks to address some of those more complex issues that the member for Gorton referred to in the first part of his speech in this debate. There is no doubt the home advice program is a very positive step in the right direction at seeking to prevent homelessness. Together with the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program and Reconnect, our government is working in a variety of ways with the state governments and local communities to address homelessness.

I will always support measures to do even more. However, undoubtedly the best thing we can do is deliver more jobs and even more opportunities for those at risk of homelessness to find stable jobs and work towards financial independence. I am also well aware that the cause goes beyond the reasons of economics. Mental illness and drug addiction play a very large role in many becoming homeless. The states and territories have to seriously relook at their mental health programs. They are not working. We have massive problems in my own area with mental health. I believe that the problem is so huge that the federal government also has a responsibility to step in and offer assistance, whether it is financial or supportive, and the
states have to act urgently to help those in need of urgent medical help. The same cooperation is also required to combat drug addiction. Our law-makers, law enforcers, courts, governments and community need to band together to help those people suffering drug addiction, which causes a lot of mental health problems and a lot of family breakdowns. I fully support anything that all governments can do to ameliorate this problem. I thank the honourable member for Gorton for raising this issue and commend the Howard government for its ongoing commitment to alleviating homelessness.

Ms HALL (Shortland) (4.06 pm)—This private member’s motion is a signal to all Australians that poverty, hardship and alienation exist in our country. It should be a wake-up call for all governments throughout Australia and in particular for the Howard government. The very fact that the 2001 census identified almost 100,000 Australians as being homeless should have rung alarm bells for the Howard government and stung it into immediate action. It should have signalled that there are major social problems in Australia, problems that it needs to address and has failed to address.

Homelessness takes many forms. It is not confined to people who are sleeping rough, who are sleeping on park benches without a roof over their head. It is not confined to people without secure accommodation such as young people who ‘couch surf’, moving from house to house, endeavouring to find somewhere to stay the night. It is not confined to people living in substandard and unsafe accommodation. Rather, it encompasses all these people—people who have inadequate accommodation.

The Australian government funds programs which are aimed at preventing homelessness. Unfortunately, these programs have not been that successful because, despite their efforts, the number of people that are homeless continues to grow. SAAP is jointly funded by the state and the Commonwealth. Each day 1,300 SAAP agencies provide assistance to 20,000 Australians who are homeless or at risk of being homeless. This sends a message to me that here in Australia we are not addressing the underlying problems and, unfortunately, the Howard government has contributed to these underlying problems.

There are many, many Australians at risk of becoming homeless, and those who do become homeless tend to fall within the group of Indigenous Australians. We have to share the blame across all levels of government for the fact that we have failed on every occasion to address the problems associated with Indigenous disadvantage.

Young people who have been in care are overrepresented in those people who are homeless. People who have been in our prisons are disproportionately represented, as are victims of violence and, in particular, domestic violence. Domestic violence is a major factor contributing to homelessness in Australia, particularly for women. That has been revealed in a recent report by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. Of the 52,700 accompanying children assessed by SAAP, 66 per cent, or 34,700 children, were accompanying women escaping domestic violence. These are people who are seeking emergency housing; these are people who are homeless. This is an issue that the government has to address and has so far failed to address adequately—and not only this government but all governments.

People with both substance abuse and mental health issues are also at risk. Our record on mental health in Australia leaves us open to condemnation. This government needs to join with the states and act to help deal with this crisis in mental health. It is a crisis, and unless it is addressed the number
of people who are homeless is going to increase.

The funding through the Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement has been inadequate and this has led to a greater demand for housing. There is inadequate private housing and particular groups find it hard to access housing. People with large families and people with children are disadvantaged at every turn as they seek to find housing. The week of 16 to 22 October was Anti-Poverty Week—a week where we as a nation needed to seriously consider the implications of homelessness. Unfortunately this did not happen. Instead, the Howard government pressed ahead with its misleading advertising campaign to sell its draconian industrial relations changes. (Time expired)

Mrs MOYLAN (Pearce) (4.11 pm)—The opportunity to support this motion by the member for Gorton about homeless people is very much appreciated. It is important to acknowledge the Prime Minister’s personal commitment to finding ways to help and reduce youth homelessness in Australia. In 1996 the Prime Minister entrusted the responsibility to me, as Minister for Family Services, to oversee the national task force to implement 26 pilot programs across Australia. This House should make no mistake: the initiative came from the Prime Minister. This was done in consultation with the state and territory governments and non-government organisations in a coordinated way.

The pilot programs were designed to reconcile young people with their families whenever that was possible. This was achieved recognising the individual situations of homeless people and the requirement to link up the many different services available across agencies. Sadly, due to abuse and irreconcilable differences, this was not always achievable and it is a sad fact that in some cases the reconciliation of young people with their families would result in the continuing abuse of the young people. Nevertheless, on the positive side, many young people and their families simply need early intervention to ensure that, whenever possible, young people can live at home and benefit from adult guidance in their teenage years. The pilot programs were implemented to inform government on the best way forward. There are countless reasons why young people are homeless and in many cases a high level of support is needed to ensure that they can stay at home. The pilot program finished in 1999 and it has now been replaced by the Reconnect program.

According to an ABS occasional paper Counting the homeless: implications for policy development, some 20,579 people were estimated to be homeless on the night of the census in 1996. Together with figures released by other agencies, the number of homeless is estimated to be in excess of 100,000 people. What should concern us very deeply is that 26,000 of those estimated to be homeless are young people between the ages of 18 and 20. It is also concerning that some agencies reveal that 58 per cent of people seeking assistance are women and that of the estimated 100,000 homeless people 52,700 have accompanying children.

As I said, there are a variety of reasons why people are homeless, but mental health, poverty, domestic violence, and sexual and physical abuse play major roles. What is very deeply concerning is the number of people with mental illness, as my colleague the member for Forde and the member for Shortland have also emphasised. These people with mental illness wander the country, living on the streets, not just without a home but without adequate mental and physical health care.

It is well known that many homeless people with mental health problems end up in
the prison system. I put it to you, Mr Deputy Speaker, and to this House that this is a great tragedy and totally unacceptable in a society that is capable of doing much better. It is the one area that the state governments, in particular, have failed to address as the policy was implemented to disband institutional care. It is very sad that we continue to see vulnerable people—whether they are children, women or those with mental health issues—without appropriate shelter and care. It is not just a challenge for government; it is a whole-of-community challenge, and it will take the cooperation of the whole of the community to meet that challenge. There is no doubt that the pilot programs implemented by the Prime Minister in 1996 have provided valuable insights into the problems and some of the solutions to homelessness, but the leadership shown by the Prime Minister needs the commitment of all state and territory leaders if we are to seriously address what has become an entrenched social disadvantage for many vulnerable people and groups in our community.

Mr JENKINS (Scullin) (4.16 pm)—I congratulate the member for Gorton for putting this motion on homelessness before the chamber. When we note that at the last census there were 100,000 homeless people in Australia we should understand that this is an evil that we must contend with within the community. It has very many complex causes. We also have to understand what we are talking about. We are not just talking about the lack of shelter. If we were doing that, we would be saying that people are ‘houseless’—as some non-government organisations refer to it. A home is very much more; it is not just a physical surrounding. It is about the way in which people see themselves connected to their communities. This is therefore an issue that all spheres of government and—as the member for Pearce has said—the community have to be involved in.

We have to reach out to people who experience the hidden poverty that exists in our nation, including in our suburbs. We have to come to an understanding of why those people find themselves homeless. They might be sleeping in their car in somebody’s backyard, sleeping on the couch of a family friend or literally sleeping outdoors. They might be in a shelter, a caravan park or a hostel. At the end of the day it is the connectedness to community that we look to.

Governments have to look at a proper, affordable housing policy. To that extent, the Commonwealth government has a great role to play. We should also recognise the changing nature of homeless people in Australia. Locally, Whittlesea Housing have told me that, while in the past domestic violence and family breakdown were the main reasons for people becoming homeless and seeking their service, now financial circumstances are right up there. In the past that could have contributed to the other reasons, but they tell me that the inadequacy of benefits compared to the cost of housing and the growing numbers of working poor are driving a change in the nature of the problem.

In my area in the northern suburbs, because of the concentration of former mental institutions, our community deals with the effects of deinstitutionalisation. It is the community itself that is reaching out to people who live in CRUs or other forms of accommodation. The points that have been raised are there in action in the community that I represent and we understand them. But we should not trade on the politics of this issue. We should put the challenge out not only to the Commonwealth government, the Howard government, but also to the states and territories and local government—to the extent that they can provide services that will be of assistance—that we all work together. Community agencies understand these problems. They confront them from day to day. It
is good to have a debate like this so that here in Canberra we can spend time thinking about this attitude and the complexities that underlie it.

The honourable member for Gorton, in introducing the motion, set out the way in which this can roll into other problems within society. So tackling homelessness is very important. As I have said, it is about appropriate shelter, support services and understanding the reasons why individuals—and, through individuals, family units—find themselves homeless. Emergency accommodation is important but only in the immediate term. It is not the long-term solution. Unfortunately many of those types of programs are now jam-packed with people who should be in more permanent forms of shelter and more permanent situations, where the kids are not changing school every term and where adults can find time to get into retraining, find themselves a job and things like that. They need to be somewhere where they have the support of the community. Often the type of accommodation that is offered in community and public housing takes them out of their neighbourhoods and their communities. We have got to acknowledge that we must provide those forms of shelter that are best suited to the people who need it.

I want to take a couple of minutes in this debate to highlight the work being done by BoysTown in my electorate of Bowman and by two individuals in particular: Brendan Bourke and Daphne Truesdale, who are working with Redland Shire to trial a new program called learning choices. I raise this in the context of homelessness because I believe this program in Bowman is innovative. It targets young students between the ages of 12 and 14 who are either unable or unwilling to continue with their school based education. It looks at new models to engage these youths and assist them to develop skills for the future.

While these details are still being finalised, it is my understanding that there are already some very promising partnerships with the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries in Queensland and the Australian Centre for Lifestyle Horticulture. In essence, with the aid of a generous grant from Minister Brendan Nelson and his department, there will be a pilot program of enterprise based education for these young Australians who are identified within their own schools in the district and are allowed to apply through a formal selection process to enter and undergo this program of re-engagement.

The program will begin next year, three weeks into the first term, and will be based at the Redlands Research Station. This is the first step towards what I hope will be the provision of a number of different learning choices or streams to children in that age group. It means that they will be able to get hands-on experience in areas other than what is taught at schools. The program will be designed by BoysTown and it will connect these young Australians with a number of retired people who are experts in their fields and who will endeavour to develop a program that re-engages these youths with school process. There will be 12 students
starting next year and, as I said, it will be closely managed out of the BoysTown model.

In a broader sense, the work that is being done to address homelessness is founded upon the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program—otherwise known as SAAP. I would also like to briefly touch upon Reconnect and the JPET scheme. These are three practical ways of addressing homelessness. With the greatest of respect to those on the other side of the chamber, you could be forgiven, having listened to them, for sensing that the federal government completely funds, runs, administers and manages services for the homeless in this country. You could also be forgiven for thinking that the only way they think we can fix homelessness is through more public housing. My point today is that nothing could be further from the truth.

If there has been one lesson learnt through the term of this government, it has been that jobs growth, job security and wage growth play an absolutely vital role in giving people pathways out of extremely difficult and challenging circumstances. It has already been mentioned by a speaker on this side of the House that, as mental health reports have consistently shown, there is an appalling quality provided by the states. The history of mental health in this country will be told by those reflecting on the tragedy of money being torn from institutionalised mental health care, going straight back into state coffers and never being spent on community health care. A fraction of those resources in this country—a few per cent—has been spent on the community, and that is a great tragedy for those who battle with mental health in this country.

It is easy enough for those on the other side of this chamber to say that this issue is all on one side and that the federal government has not done enough. The simple fact is that under SAAP and the fifth agreement the federal government increased funding by 18 per cent—not eight per cent, not 2.8 per cent or the sorts of tiny increases that we have seen from state governments in areas of social sector spending—to $932 million over five years. Importantly, that is a $100 million increase on the last SAAP agreement that was struck. That is a demonstrated commitment from the federal government. It cannot run, manage and administer these systems but it funds them generously, as it funds the Reconnect system, which enables, in a very positive way, those that are homeless to access improved services for counselling, mediation and practical help. The Job Placement Employment Training scheme has been allocated a similar amount, $20 million a year, for this very valuable cause.

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

Education of Regional Australians

Mr WAKELIN (Grey) (4.26 pm)—I move:

That this House:

(1) recognises that the Australian Government has made significant progress for regional Australians in further education;

(2) notes that:

(a) the first principle should be that all Australians are entitled to reasonable access to education including tertiary education;

(b) regional Australians should not be disadvantaged by the additional costs of access to education to be competent in the workforce;
(c) there are significant additional costs for rural people in obtaining access to further education institutions only available in the capital cities or major urban centres; and

(d) the educational outcomes of regional Australians demonstrate a significantly lower proportion with university degrees and completed postgraduate studies when compared to the national outcomes; and

(3) calls on the Australian Government:

(a) to recognise that about 65% of Australia’s export income is derived from the regional areas of Australia;

(b) to recognise that the continual development of all skills will assist to maintain and expand this key economic sector;

(c) to recognise that the cost of achieving greater educational equity is minimal when compared to the results possible; and

(d) to further analyse equity in the education of regional Australians to achieve fairer outcomes for all Australians.

The Australian government has made significant progress in terms of regional Australians in further education and I will remind the House of some elements of that progress. The basic boarding allowance has seen significant improvements—there is an additional boarding allowance, subject to parental income and actual boarding fees paid. The second home allowance has been in place for a very long time. It is something that most Australians would overlook but when many people go away to school—that is, leave their homes, particularly in regional and remote Australia, and go into urban areas—they leave their fundamental roots. They leave their family and so, in many cases, the family chooses to join them—such is the value of education. We have a distance education allowance, the pensioner education supplement et cetera.

The vocational education and training budget initiatives are where this government has really made great progress in recent years. The Youth Allowance, Austudy and Abstudy for new apprentices are very significant steps forward. In the technical colleges, the tool kit and a range of other programs are vital to Australia at this time in its cycle.

We should remind ourselves about apprenticeships in training in rural and regional Australia. I will select South Australia. In 1995 there were 2,340 apprentices and in 2004 there were 8,270. I am pleased to report to the House that that is a 250 per cent increase, the highest in our nation. I go now to commencements in a similar period. In South Australia there were 950 in 1995, and in 2004 there were 6,090. That is a 541 per cent increase—a remarkable increase; the highest in Australia.

In my motion I noted that regional Australians should not be disadvantaged. In other words we should apply the fair go principle. The first principle should be that regional Australians are entitled to at least reasonable access like everyone else, and this government has gone a long way towards achieving that. There are, however, significant additional costs for people in rural and remote areas. Whilst we are attending to that, I think it is still unfinished business.

The education outcomes—and this is a critical point—for regional Australians demonstrate a significantly lower proportion with university degrees and engaged in postgraduate studies when compared to the national outcomes. Let me illustrate that to the House. In the latest statistics that I have, from the 2001 ABS census of population housing, the proportion of people in major cities with postgraduate degrees is 2.3 per
cent of the population; in remote, 0.6 per cent; and very remote, 0.5 per cent. The national average is 1.8 per cent. So there we have a factor to compare to our major cities: by a factor of almost five, you are less likely to have a postgraduate degree if you happen to live in remote or very remote Australia. If you happen to live in an outer regional area, you are a bit over a third as likely to achieve that—that is, you are three times less likely to have a postgrad degree.

For graduate diploma certificates, looking at a comparison with the Australian average—perhaps that is the easiest—regional Australians are about half as likely to have a graduate diploma certificate. If you have a bachelor’s degree, you are a little more fortunate, but a little over half as likely—that is, you are twice less likely—to have a bachelor’s degree if you live in very remote, remote or outer regional areas than if you live in the city. So clearly there is some room for improvement in this whole approach.

To conclude this little segment today, we recognise that 65 per cent of Australia’s exports are derived from the regional areas of Australia. The continued development of skills in all areas, including through postgrad and degree courses, is critical to the continuing importance of and contribution to our export economy. The final point I would like to make is that, if we neglect these people, we neglect a vital resource and we neglect to honour the principle in Australia of a fair go.

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

Ms KING (Ballarat) (4.31 pm)—I second the motion. Can I start by congratulating the member for Grey on the motion before the House today concerning the education of regional Australians. As someone who represents a regional community, I am passionate about the opportunities available for people in my district, and no issue is more important in determining the life chances of regional people than access to education. When you look at educational outcomes across Australia, regional Australians fare badly. There are a lower proportion of regional Australians with post-secondary education, university degrees and completed postgraduate studies when compared against national outcomes. In my own district, for example, 17.7 per cent of the population over the age of 21 hold a bachelor’s degree, while in metropolitan Melbourne that percentage is around 25.4 per cent. The reason for this disparity is not merit or ability; it is purely and utterly opportunity and equality—and not just opportunity and equality between metropolitan and regional and rural communities but also opportunity and equality across and between regional communities.

Regional Australia, as the member for Grey has rightly pointed out, is responsible for 65 per cent of Australia’s export income. It is home to some of the most innovative manufacturing companies, covering food production, mining equipment, IT technology and, in my own electorate, car componentry. Regional people are employed across all sectors: building and other trades, manufacturing, engineering, town planning, medicine, teaching, law, agriculture, business, the environment and the arts. Yet, for people in regional Australia, accessing tertiary or post-secondary education is increasingly difficult, and the quality of the educational experience able to be offered is of concern.

There is something seriously wrong with our system when employers tell me they cannot fill vacancies for electrical engineers, welders, fitters and turners, middle management, town planning, professional doctors, dentists, teachers or welfare workers at the same time as there is an unemployment rate above the national average and when there is a teenage unemployment rate almost three times that. At the same time in regional Aus-
tralia we have had to import our skilled and professional workers, not just from overseas but also from major capital cities. There is something seriously wrong with regional education when that is occurring.

We on this side of the House believe it is a core responsibility of government to educate and train the population, regardless of where they live. It is not just the right thing to do; it is the smart thing to do economically. It is a responsibility that this government has absolutely abdicated. Five billion dollars has been slashed from our universities under this government’s watch. Regional universities have been plunged into a funding crisis and many of them are struggling to say viable. The government also cut funding out of our national vocational education and training system to the tune of $600 million between 1997 and 2000.

The refusal of the Minister for Education, Science and Training to increase funding to our universities through proper indexation is also a major factor in the quality of the teaching experience able to be offered through our universities. Regional universities have been hardest hit. Most of them are now so reliant on funding from full fee paying international students that, if there is a downturn in the market in any of the countries they are reliant on, they will be in severe trouble.

For those coming from a regional community which has an average income well below the national average, the costs of education are a major factor in determining whether young people in regional communities will take the step into higher education. Many of those who do choose to go to university, TAFE or a registered training organisation are the first in their families ever to do so. It is therefore extremely disturbing to see that new figures from the Australian Taxation Office show Australian university students and graduates will owe a staggering $13.292 billion in outstanding HECS debts in 2005 and 2006 alone. HECS fee hikes have pushed the cost of higher education beyond the reach of many families at a time when Australia has a severe skills shortage in key professions and industries. Young people are graduating from university with massive debts, making it so much harder to buy a home, start a family and get ahead.

The government’s record has recently been highlighted in an OECD report, where they have criticised the government’s lack of investment in education and training. Whilst our competitors are moving forward, Australia is going backwards in this regard. We have reduced the contribution that we as a society are making from the public purse towards education and training. It is to our shame that the Howard government has allowed this to occur.

Mr FAWCETT (Wakefield) (4.36 pm)—I rise to talk about rural education. I support the motion moved by the member for Grey. I would like to speak from both a national and a local perspective. Nationally, it concerns fundamentally an issue of equity. These people are Australians and they deserve the same access to quality education that people living in metropolitan areas have. Also, this is an investment in the people who are the very future of our primary industries and also our regionally based tourism industries. They need the skills and the training that anyone does to make sure those industries remain viable and innovative into the future.

At a national level, I am very happy to see a number of initiatives that have been put in place by the Australian government to support education for both adults and young people in rural and remote communities. Some 17½ per cent of all domestic students are in regional and remote areas and some 39 per cent of vocational education and training
takes place in our regions, so we are talking about a sizeable group in the Australian community. Specifically, I am happy to see the Australian government recognise the value of farm and business assets and that they will be significantly discounted when considering eligibility for young people who need support to move to metropolitan areas for education assistance. That is a very welcome move for many families in the electorate of Wakefield.

I also note the effectiveness of such programs as Assistance for Isolated Children, the distance education allowance, the non-government schools hostel program, the country area program, as well as regional loadings for tertiary institutions. Also, at the adult level, there are things like the FarmBis program for education in business skills, such as finance, marketing, quality assurance and risk management, all of which underpin primary industries in the area. There is also the assistance to employers to encourage them to take on apprentices in areas of skills shortages. Those are all good things that have happened at a national level.

At a local level, though, I am very conscious, representing the seat of Wakefield, that Wakefield is similar to many areas in Australia where we do not fall within the definition of being isolated. We fail the 300-kilometre benchmark, which is used in many of the determinations as to whether you are isolated. But the reality for families, schools, training providers and small business is that the distances involved still represent a significant barrier to accessing the kinds of training and job placement options that are required, due to either the distance or the population density. So many of the issues are just as real, even though perhaps we do not face the same issues as those faced in the electorate of Grey.

I have spoken to principals and to the school communities in places like Balaklava, Kapunda, Clare and Riverton. They have spoken, without exception, of the difficulty in attracting and retaining specialist teachers in country areas. Without these specialist teachers, reducing the scope of what we can offer, we start diminishing the quality of the education that we provide to our young people. In South Australia this situation has been exacerbated by a recent decision by the state government to remove any loadings for rural schools, which has made it even harder for schools to fund a broad curriculum for young people. This is particularly the case not only in classic specialities but also in the area of vocational education and training at a time when there is a large demand in regional areas. The options for secondary students to have specialist VET teachers or to access ongoing skills training, whether it be through TAFE or registered training organisations, is highly impacted through the lack of availability of courses in regional areas and the costs and time burden of accessing it in metropolitan areas.

Education and training advisers of Rural Skills Australia noted that, in South Australia, although some funding is provided to TAFE, it is not provided to RTOs who they contend are perhaps best placed to provide a very responsive service to the agricultural sector in terms of some VET skills. Vocational education and training post school is also short. Places like the Clare and Gilbert valleys have a large tourism opportunity there, but they do not have places to train people in some of the basic hospitality skills. So there is a need for ongoing investment in TAFE and also in RTOs to provide that option.

Aged care, health and disability care is another sector where the need is there but the training options are not. Whether we are talking about the school or the adult education
level, I call on governments, both state and federal, to continue focusing on providing the support that our regional communities need to ensure they have equitable access, because it is this investment in people that will underpin the important tourism and primary industries, whereby regional Australia delivers so much benefit to the Australian community.

Mr MARTIN FERGUSON (Batman) (4.41 pm)—I rise this afternoon to speak about an issue critical to Australia’s economic and social development—that is, equitable access to education. When it comes to equity in regional education, it is the Indigenous population which suffers the most. Young Indigenous students are twice as likely as non-Indigenous students to have left school before completing year 10 and are half as likely to complete year 12. Indigenous Australians are less than a quarter as likely as non-Indigenous Australians to go to university. Moreover, the number attending university has declined since 1999.

For the first time since the 1990s there has been a decline in the number of Indigenous students in vocational education. At school, statistics show that 20 per cent fewer Indigenous students are achieving the literacy benchmarks of non-Indigenous students. Is it little wonder that nearly half of the 15- to 17-year-old Indigenous Australians in the labour force are either unemployed or on the CDEP? We all accept that education is critical to the future of all Australians, but this is particularly the case for Indigenous Australians.

Many of the economic and social issues which confront Aboriginal communities have their origins in poor literacy, leading to unemployment, low self-esteem, alcohol and drug abuse, petrol sniffing and cultural alienation. But what the Howard government is failing to recognise is the economic ramifications of these challenges on the education front for Indigenous communities. It is ignoring a pool of future skilled workers at a time of acute labour shortages. As the resources industry continues to boom, its capacity to service demand shrinks. Labour and skills shortages are a key concern for the industry now and in the future. At the same time, Aboriginal land councils are anxious to see the development of Aboriginal communities through mining and resources employment.

Queensland Mines, for example, employed more than 200 Indigenous people—out of a local population of around 800—at Narbalek uranium mine in the Northern Territory between 1980 and 1987. The Saskatchewan uranium industry is one of the largest employers of aboriginal people in Canada and more than 40 per cent of employees at the former Cluff Lake Mine were aboriginal. It took many years to achieve this result and effective Aboriginal employment policies were pursued rigorously. But a critical barrier to employment is the literacy level of Indigenous Australians. Out of a total work force of 300 staff at the Ranger uranium mine in Kakadu, only 33 Aborigines are employed. More importantly, unfortunately, few of those are local to the area of the mine.

Rio Tinto employs more than 700 Aborigines, which represents seven per cent of its work force. In a little over a decade, Rio estimates there will be an increase of 10,000 in the Aboriginal population in the regions of its operations in Northern Australia. With a mining boom, it sees that its work force must increasingly come from the local Indigenous community. To this end, the company has invested more than $400 million in Aboriginal governed trusts for regional development that go towards health and education. Importantly, to offer an incentive to young Aborigines to stay in school, the Chief Executive Officer of Comalco made a public commit-
ment that all year 10 Aboriginal graduates on Western Cape York would be given an opportunity for employment at Comalco’s Weipa operations. But to get to that point takes the commitment of governments. The crisis in Indigenous education has gone on for too long. It is critical that both underinvestment and effective delivery of education are addressed in these regional communities. The future prospects for Aboriginal employment and communities are dependent on raising literacy amongst young people through better investment in regional educational opportunities.

The motion before the House is to be commended. It is not just about getting people to school and getting Indigenous communities to embrace a more rigorous approach to education; it is also about companies and government working in partnership to encourage improvements in literacy and numeracy and about encouraging young Indigenous community people to remain at school in the hope of finding gainful employment. The resources sector in regional Australia and high Indigenous fertility rates represent a terrific opportunity to not only suit our needs economically as a nation but also make huge improvements on the social front. Education is critical. It is about equity. We have failed Indigenous communities, we have failed the private sector and we have failed regional Australia to date through a failure to actually invest in the educational opportunities of young Indigenous Australians. I commend the motion to the House and encourage all levels of government to aggressively seize these opportunities. (Time expired)

Mr BRUCE SCOTT (Maranoa) (4.46 pm)—I rise today to address this private member’s motion with my wholehearted support. As members of the House would be aware, Maranoa is a rural electorate covering almost 50 per cent of the landmass of Queensland, with many remote locations where children often need to leave home to gain access to education. Since we have come to government, support for access to education for these isolated children has come a long way. The Minister for Education, Science and Training and this government have listened. I commend the minister for listening prior to the last federal election and for his willingness to listen not only to members in rural communities but also to members of the Isolated Children’s Parents Association regarding affordable access to education.

Affordable access to education should be considered not a privilege but a right for all Australians. Since coming to government, we have provided increased support for access to primary and secondary education. I would like to outline three of the initiatives that the minister and this government have acted upon. Firstly, there is the increased financial support which cut in on 1 January this year for the AIC allowance, the basic boarding allowance. Then there is the home tutors allowance and also the viability subsidy for term hostel assistance. These are three critical areas of assistance for students at the primary and secondary level to gain access to affordable education. Reforms to the country area program have also provided much-needed targeted assistance for geographically isolated children. I see how that is benefiting students almost every time I travel in the western parts of my electorate.

Significant improvements in communications have made distance education more attractive for many families living on properties and in small towns in remote parts of Australia. Improvements include the $168 million that this government committed to ending the timed local call that so many people had to endure and pay for and that distance education students in particular had to pay for to gain access to their teacher who, in
most cases, lived many miles away. Of course, the rollout of the two-way satellite to give broadband access to those students is also a spin-off from that $168 million, which has certainly improved the communications levels for students in those remote communities.

While we are providing basic assistance for families in regional Australia to gain access to affordable, quality primary and secondary education, there is limited government assistance for access to tertiary education. This makes undertaking further studies unattractive to many school leavers who live in rural and remote parts of Australia. In fact, research has found students from rural and remote parts of Australia undertake tertiary education at approximately two-thirds the rate of their city counterparts. The primary reason for this is the inevitable high cost of living away from home while gaining access to tertiary education. These full-time students may be eligible for youth allowance. However, if you look at the criteria—and I have discussed this with many of the parents in my electorate of Maranoa—many students are simply not eligible because they do not meet the independent criterion. This criterion stipulates that full-time students must have earned a certain amount of income or worked a certain number of hours during the past 18 months before they can be considered independent. So we are encouraging students to create a situation where they are no longer dependent on their parents so that they get independent status and can get youth allowance. By not satisfying this criterion, the eligibility test means they then have to go to their parents for that inevitable support. That is when so many students drop out, because their parents cannot support them due to their limited means and the high costs of gaining access to tertiary education.

I am calling on the government through this motion to consider adding to the number of achievements we have made in providing additional assistance for primary and secondary education by extending assistance for gaining access to tertiary education for students who are geographically isolated from tertiary institutions. I think the ICPA, which has recently been down here in Canberra regarding this issue, suggested that the allowance should be called the ‘tertiary access allowance’. It is imperative that this basic access payment is free from the asset-income test to give students affordable access to tertiary education. (Time expired)

Mr ADAMS (Lyons) (4.51 pm)—I appreciate that the member for Grey has good reason to talk of rural education. I thank him for the opportunity to speak on the subject, but I was quite intrigued by this motion as it seeks to assert that the Australian government have made some progress for regional Australians in further education. If they have, I ask could they please let me know what they have done for my electorate of Lyons. So far, most of the few opportunities that we used to have seem to have disappeared and, apart from a bit of an argument in the Bass electorate around Launceston about who is going to run what, nothing new has been announced.

We still retain our regional university outlets which were set up under a Labor government and which still allow young Tasmanians to access university education close to their homes. We still have a TAFE system which is offering many programs for our young people to gain apprenticeships and traineeships. I certainly hope we do not weaken the standards of our TAFE and technical training through the experiment that this government is starting to conduct. We have to compete with China and India in the future and we need to keep our skill levels high, but there is little happening that is adding to TAFE opportunities and no new programs have been proposed by this government.
We certainly need to allow rural people access to training at the tertiary level. Our farmers are crying out for a skilled work force and even for greater access to unskilled workers, such as those who come to our shores for working holidays. But the most likely candidates for work in the rural sector on these working holidays are not being afforded the opportunity to work. I do not see why our young friends in the Pacific cannot come over for working holidays like everybody else. Yes, we need to further develop our rural industry skills, yet there are no training places being offered yet. People are still coming into rural industries, such as meatworks, and other jobs that involve hard manual labour without the basic skills of workplace safety. This is leading to injuries in young people just starting out, so that after three months they are no longer picked up for shifts because they are injured and cannot do the work they have been employed for. It is harder to get workers compensation and there is no training to help them avoid these injuries, and now even their right to contest unfair dismissal will be removed.

We need training at all levels, and not just at university or in higher skills; our workers need to be able to undertake work as soon as they start employment. There is not the opportunity for youngsters to work their way up from making the tea to cleaning up and then being taught by example as they go along, as we used to do years ago. We need access to training in rural areas, but it must be geared to the needs of the industries in each community and it must allow those industries to treat the trainees fairly and equally and not try and make them sign up to impossible work conditions as exist now and will get worse if this government’s industrial relations legislation goes through the parliament.

Indeed, it is true that 65 per cent of Australia’s export income is derived from regional areas, but the skills are not being developed there. Federal funding is not finding its way there and, in fact, if anything, where training is closely linked with working conditions, it seems that the motion moved by member for Grey will wither and die on the vine.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. IR Causley)—Order! The time allotted for this debate has expired. The debate is adjourned and the resumption of the debate will be made an order of the day for the next sitting. The member for Lyons will have leave to continue speaking when the debate is resumed.

GRIEVANCE DEBATE

Question proposed:
That grievances be noted.

Anzac Cove

Mr Griffin (Bruce) (4.56 pm)—There can be no doubt that the government have become arrogant and out of touch with the Australian people. They have become drunk on power and will do and say anything to ensure they stay in power. We have seen the extraordinary measures the government will take to avoid scrutiny or blame from the public, and today I would like to highlight some of the more extreme examples from my portfolio.

This government has seriously failed to protect one of Australia’s most important military historic sites. When newspapers first reported the desecration of Anzac Cove in March this year, I, like many on this side of the House, joined in the concern and condemnation voiced by all Australians. The Gallipoli campaign was without doubt one of the most important military campaigns that this nation has ever fought in, and yet under this government the site has been damaged permanently to the detriment of current and future generations.
Every government, whether Labor or Liberal, has been given the task since the end of World War I to ensure the protection of Anzac Cove. Only this government has failed in its duty. In the words of the cross-party Senate inquiry, the government was ‘asleep at the wheel’. If members look at the history and the evidence of this sorry saga, they will surely see the unmistakable fingerprints of the Howard government. Since the revelations of the desecration of Anzac Cove first appeared, there has been and continues to be nothing but denials of culpability and blame shifting.

The facts are simple: the government knew that constructions were taking place on the road above Anzac Cove back in October 2004 and senior Department of Veterans’ Affairs officials were advised by Turkish authorities that the road was to be widened. The government knew about the roadworks and failed to either monitor the works or take direct action when the extensive construction work was uncovered.

When Gallipoli historian Bill Sellars first came forward with his evidence of bone fragments being uncovered, it was consistently denied by the government, despite the pictures he produced that appeared in the Daily Telegraph and the Herald Sun. No serious investigations were undertaken to look into the reports. There was a cursory examination, but that is all. The Senate inquiry, however, found that bone fragments had been uncovered. What we saw from the government was the familiar pattern of blame shifting and denial. The reputations of historians were smeared in an attempt by this government to spin its way out of the desecration its inactivity had caused at Anzac Cove.

We are yet to reach the end of this sorry tale of incompetence and mismanagement by this government. There is scant information as to how the heritage sites at Gallipoli will be preserved and if further damage will be avoided. There was an announcement by the Prime Minister on 26 April 2005 that a joint engineering review and archaeological and historical survey would be undertaken, but we are still no closer to identifying what has happened and how the two governments are cooperating. While I doubt that we will ever hear a member of the Howard government admit to any responsibility in this matter, we can look to the comments by the DVA secretary, Mr Mark Sullivan, when in an interview on radio he helped define the role of the government:

DVA in a broader role had some responsibility to look broader than our commemorative ceremony at Gallipoli, at ANZAC. The roads were part of that. We should have been looking more broadly and we got caught on roads.

Then of course we have the fiasco surrounding the minister’s handling of the Office of Australian War Graves. Under the Minister for Veterans’ Affairs we have seen one of the most well respected directors of the Office of Australian War Graves, Air Vice Marshal Gary Beck, sidelined and put on leave. Why has she done this? Simply put, it was done to cover up her incompetent handling of the construction works at Anzac Cove on the Gallipoli Peninsula.

Air Vice Marshal Gary Beck has had a distinguished career serving our country in the ADF. He enlisted in the RAAF as an air cadet in January 1960 and is a graduate of the RAAF Academy, the Canadian Forces Staff College and the USAF Air War College. He holds a Bachelor of Science degree from Melbourne University, a Master of Public Administration degree from Auburn University, Alabama, and is a former International Research Fellow of the National Defence University, Washington DC.

Air Vice Marshal Beck was appointed as director in January 1998. He was reappointed
for a two-year term in January 2001 and was then reappointed for a third time in January 2003 for a term of three years ending in January 2006. He is truly a well-respected, intelligent and competent man. He was also, unfortunately, the victim of this government’s shameless political expediency.

In August this year the Herald Sun broke the story that Air Vice Marshal Beck considered himself a ‘scapegoat’ for the fiascos surrounding Anzac Cove and Hellfire Pass. In this article AVM Beck highlighted the extraordinary lack of communication between himself and the current minister. He stated that, while he had had weekly briefings with the previous two ministers:

... I’ve never briefed this Minister.”

He went on to state:

“I’m a scapegoat all right, after eight years of service ... And that:

“She would put two and two together and take the simple solution, to get rid of the guy whose caused the publicity.

The minister’s response was, of course, to blame someone else. As AVM Beck predicted, he was the target of her exit strategy and she has since tried to lay the blame for the Gallipoli constructions squarely on the doorstep of someone—anyone other than the government. The minister stated in an article the following day:

Had I given the response that Mr Beck gave us, I would have seriously misled the Parliament and the public ... I felt it was not handled in a professional way and I was not getting accurate information.

This is a fine comment coming from a minister who had never even bothered to get on the phone and seek a single meeting or briefing.

I would now like to discuss the fate of those who would wish to draw attention to the failings and incompetence of this government. Not content to just vilify, shame and blame others for their shortcomings, this government has taken the extraordinary step of trying to jail public servants who would bring to light any information that may draw attention to the government’s incompetence.

In early February 2004 the government was considering its response to the Clark review. The Clark review made 109 recommendations, which would have cost $600 million over some four years. On Friday, 20 February 2004, Herald Sun journalists Michael Harvey and Gerald McManus reported that in secret documents the government agreed to less than one-sixth of the extra benefits recommended by the review. The total package the government signed off on was $100.6 million. This included just five out of the 65 recommendations for change. The government was exposed as being cheap, mean spirited and out of touch with the Australian veteran community.

In what has become a hallmark of this government’s modus operandi, they instigated a massive witch-hunt in the department, seeking to punish those responsible and to intimidate other staff who may wish to bring transparency to the government’s inner workings. The Federal Police were called in following the publication of the article by McManus and Harvey and conducted a search of 3,000 phone extensions and hundreds of mobile phone records. The result of all this was that a public servant, Mr Desmond Kelly, was charged under the Crimes Act for the unauthorised disclosure of information. He faces a maximum two-year jail sentence if convicted. As for the journalists, on two separate occasions they refused to name the person who provided them with the information when asked by a judge. Both journalists were officially charged with contempt of court in mid-October.
What we see here is further evidence of the arrogance of a government that will stop at nothing to ensure that all voices of dissent are silenced. What this government fails to realise is that transparency and accountability in government is essential for the flower of democracy to thrive. We have seen the consistent response to this government under crisis—put on the jackboot and pass the blame. This government needs to change its ways. It needs to learn that the only way to govern effectively, fairly and democratically is to allow in the light of public scrutiny.

The case McManus and Harvey has been raised in this House on a number of occasions and publicly on a range of other occasions. We have had members of the government say, with hands on their hearts, that these journalists should not be in a situation where they have to go to court and that charges should not proceed. They tend to blame the department for the action that has been taken with the original action. What is occurring with respect to the leak within Veterans’ Affairs is unprecedented. If you go back through the circumstances of this government and previous governments, you will see that it just has not happened before like that. I defy anyone on the other side of the House to come forward with an example of where you have had journalists and public servants treated in this fashion. A range of other actions could have been taken. Instead what we saw is persecution of the highest level.

This government needs to develop the courage required to admit to its mistakes and failings, and fix the problems it has helped create. Unfortunately, this is not what it is going to do. We are going to continue to see it go on trampling over the rights of many, working in a manner without any real concern or regard for the truth and without any real concern for proper process. It ought to be condemned, because there is no doubt that what is happening on this occasion is an absolute travesty of justice.

**Cystic Fibrosis**

Mr Michael Ferguson (Bass) (5.06 pm)—I rise today to inform the House and all members about a wonderful two weeks I have just spent in my electorate of Bass in support of a very worthy cause and the inspiring way in which the community has responded. Before I was elected to federal parliament I got to know a remarkable young West Launceston girl, Meg Willes. Meg has cystic fibrosis. Today we are great friends. Like most people who meet Meg, at first I had no idea that her daily routine was so rigorous and that the simple things I take for granted are life threatening issues for Meg. It is heartbreakingly to learn that some CF kids will not live past their twenties.

Meg is now 12 and she has so much to live for. A regimented exercise and physio routine, a healthy diet, about 20 enzyme tablets a day, a magnificent family and sheer determination keep Meg as healthy as possible. Other CF children are not so lucky and suffer from regular severe chest infections; they cannot digest food well, which leads to malnutrition. There is no cure for CF and treatment costs are high.

Cystic fibrosis is the most common life threatening genetic disease in Australian children today. Every four days, an Aussie baby is born with CF. CF is an inherited condition. For a child to be born with CF, both parents must carry the CF gene. Carriers of the gene do not have any symptoms of the disease. One in 25 people carry the CF gene. If two people carry the gene, with every pregnancy there is a one in four chance that the child will have cystic fibrosis.

Mr Deputy Speaker, you or I could carry the gene without knowing it. On a statistical basis, I would expect there are at least six members of the House of Representatives,
men and women, who carry the gene without knowing it. Close to one million Australians are carriers of the disease gene without knowing it. Tasmania has a higher incidence of CF than other parts of Australia.

In CF, the mucus glands cause normal mucus to change to a thick sticky substance. This mucus clogs the tiny passages in the lungs and traps bacteria. Repeated infections and blockages can cause irreversible lung damage and even death. The pancreas is also impaired, preventing the release of enzymes needed for the digestion of food. People with CF look quite unremarkable but will often show signs of a persistent cough, some difficulty or effort with breathing, wheezing, tiredness and lethargy, frequent visits to the toilet and poor appetite. CF sufferers must also have intensive daily chest physio to break up the build-up of mucus in the lungs. Most people with CF will also take up to 40 enzyme replacement tablets each day to aid digestion. They have high-energy diets, with added vitamins and salt. Regular visits to CF clinics, hospitalisation and antibiotic treatment are common for people with CF.

Most sadly, people with cystic fibrosis do not enjoy a long life. The main cause of death is related to the disease’s effect on the lungs. Some will die in their teenage years, before reaching adulthood. Many will die in their 20s and early 30s. There is no cure for CF but, with today’s improved treatment, most people with CF are able to lead a reasonably normal and productive life. A great amount of effort is also being directed to raising money for new and improved ways of treating CF and of finally gaining control of the condition.

As a community leader with an opportunity to make a difference, I announced early in my time as member for Bass that I would walk 200 kilometres across Northern Tasmania to raise money for Cystic Fibrosis Tasmania, which works with the nearly 100 Tasmanian CF sufferers and their families, and to raise funds for the Australian Cystic Fibrosis Research Trust, which in turn funds hard research into better treatments for CF and even gene therapy, which holds out the hope of a future cure for CF.

After an official launch earlier in the year by the Prime Minister, I honoured that commitment on 14 October by starting my 200-kilometre Walk for Meg, the trek around my electorate of Bass. Over 16 days I was joined by literally hundreds of people from all sections of the Northern Tasmanian community. We were united in the goal to raise both community awareness and funds. Community awareness, of course, is just as important as funds, because, as a team, the community will be much better placed to tackle the problem.

My walk started on the jewel of Bass Strait, the stunningly beautiful Flinders Island. From Whitemark, I walked through almost every town in Bass. Along the way I walked through Bridport, Pipers River, Low Head, George Town, Hillwood, Windermere, Dilston, Karoola, Lalla, Lilydale, Nabowla, Scottsdale, Winnaleah, Derby, Branxholm, Legerwood, Ringarooma, Nunamara, Legana and a string of suburbs around the City of Launceston, until I finished the 200-kilometre walk in the Launceston Mall just last Saturday afternoon. The walk was much more than I ever expected. It was a physical challenge to me and my fellow walkers. The weather was very variable—at times beautiful and at times atrocious. In those two weeks, I think we had four seasons and we walked with the benefit of both sunscreen and raincoats.

During the two weeks of my walk, I spoke of CF at many public gatherings around Northern Tasmania, especially at the many
schools communities who, to their great and everlasting credit, got right behind the effort and held their very own special events in order to support the Walk for Meg. They were very creative. Many held wear-red-for-Meg days, others held free-dress days and one had a crazy hair day. Still others willingly sent small or large groups of energetic students and teachers who walked briskly with me. As I went from school to school, I was presented with the funds that had been raised by the student leaders. In so many cases, those student leaders told me that their fundraiser for CF had been the most successful that they had held, based on the amount raised and also on the level of student participation.

I sincerely thank them all, but I want to single out a number of schools: Flinders Island District High School, Port Dalrymple School, South George Town Primary School, Star of the Sea College, Rocherlea Primary School, Mayfield Primary School, Lilydale District High School, Scottsdale Primary School, Scottsdale High School, Winnaleah District High School, Branjholm Primary School, Ringarooma Primary School, Waverley Primary School, St Leonards Primary School, Ravenswood Heights, Seabrook Christian School, Mowbray Heights Primary School, Launceston Church Grammar School, St Anthony's Primary School, Launceston Christian School, Riverside High School, Scotch Oakburn College, John Calvin School, St Patrick's College and Norwood Primary School. The schools were particularly inspiring, with special days that they organised. So often—and this was very humbling—it was the smaller country schools and the schools in less well off areas that provided the biggest displays of generosity and enthusiasm. I want to pay tribute today to so many people who went the extra mile with me for Meg and the other CF sufferers. First and foremost, I want to thank Meg Willes, along with her close and extended family, for being such an important part of this initiative. Not only did Meg and the Willes family agree to take on a very public role; they also worked very hard as a real tribe in practical ways such as organisation, driving vehicles, shaking tins and licking envelopes. I thank them all from the bottom of my heart.

Secondly, I pay tribute to my wife, Julie, who worked tirelessly and anonymously over the last six months—just about every day and often very late into the night—to provide the organisational leadership which made the Walk for Meg so successful. As a mum to our three children and the wife of a politician, she is already a very busy woman with plenty of responsibilities. However, to her everlasting credit, she too is passionate about helping Meg and other CF sufferers, and my Walk for Meg achievements are equally hers. It is no wonder I love this dynamic woman so much.

Today I also earnestly want to thank everyone individually who has been involved. But, alas, this would take much longer than I am allowed to speak. I thank all the walkers, the sponsors, the auction item donors, the vehicle drivers, the first aid officers, the sandwich makers, those who stood in shopping centres for days collecting loose change, those who cared for our children, the media and those who rallied others to support our cause. They performed magnificently, sacrificially and cheerfully. Their combined efforts dwarfed my efforts in actually walking those 200 kilometres. I am truly humbled by them and intensely proud of them.

The fundraising effort for Walk for Meg is not over, as a special auction finale is still to be held, but I can inform the House that I expect that funds of around $20,000 will be raised. I found that the community showed a
strong sense of looking out for each other, although this not surprising; as Northern Tasmanians, we pride ourselves on our community mindedness. Northern Tasmania has been gracious, understanding and generous. I am grateful to my community for joining me to meet the challenge of CF. I hope and pray to God for these dear ones like Meg. I thank the House.

Telstra

Ms HALL (Shortland) (5.16 pm)—It is with a heavy heart that I stand to make this speech before the parliament, because in recent times I have become more and more concerned about the arrogance of the Howard government, and, of course, that will have enormous implications for the people of Australia. After the 2004 election, when the Howard government gained control of the Senate, the Prime Minister assured the Australian people that his government would not become arrogant and would not take the Australian people for granted. But every action and indication for the future make these words of the Prime Minister pure fiction. He and his government are pursuing an extreme ideological agenda and forcing this agenda on the Australian people without providing unbiased information or allowing proper debate. An excellent example of this is the Howard government’s arrogance in blatantly spending $40 million of Australian taxpayers’ money on advertising its draconian industrial relations changes instead of providing unbiased information that gives the argument for and against these changes so that all Australians can make informed decisions as to whether or not these changes will benefit them and the nation as a whole.

This week two important and nation-changing pieces of legislation are listed for debate: the government’s terrorism legislation and the industrial relations legislation. My fear is that these important pieces of legislation will be introduced, debated and passed within the same week or, possibly, the same day. If they follow the government’s arrogant handling of the Telstra privatisation legislation, that is exactly what will happen. The Howard government’s action in gagging the debate on the full sale of Telstra was reprehensible. I suppose you could say that I have a vested interest in this, because I was due to speak just as the government decided to gag the debate. I was extremely upset about the arrogant gagging of this debate and about being prevented from speaking, because the people of Shortland electorate had told me very clearly what they thought about the full sale of Telstra, and I am going to take this opportunity to share that with the House today. They told me that they are very worried that, when Telstra is fully privatised, prices will increase and the poor service that already exists in Shortland electorate will get worse—that Telstra will be driven by profit, not by providing services.

Within the electorate of Shortland, Telstra services are by no means up to standard. I have to say that Telstra Country Wide within my region are always willing to try to help, but sometimes you cannot solve insolvable problems. The office is constantly contacted by people with regard to mobile phone coverage and problems of not being able to access broadband. For instance, when the bush fire brigade situated at Gwandalan have to respond to fire alerts, the only place where they can access mobile phone coverage is by standing on top of the fire engine; when they stand on top of their fire engine they can pick up a signal. To me, that compromises the safety of the area and shows that the services are not up to scratch. Shortland electorate is not in a remote or provincial area; rather, it is considered by this government to be in the outer metropolitan area. But I can say to the members of this House that I cannot travel from one end of my electorate to the other...
without my mobile phone coverage falling out on at least six occasions.

This government has promised nothing to help the people of Shortland electorate. It is not going to do anything to improve their telephone service. It really upsets me that the part of the electorate with which I have the most trouble with mobile phone coverage, the part of the electorate from which I receive the most complaints, is the Central Coast. It is very interesting that the member for Dobell, whose electorate adjoins mine on the Central Coast, said in a speech to parliament that the residents of his electorate wanted cheaper prices and better telecommunications services and that is why Telstra should be sold. But I have news for the member for Dobell: that is not what they will get; they will get poorer services and higher prices, and that can be supported by international experience.

The member for Dobell also said that the sale is in the best long-term interests of the people of Australia even though, as a private company, Telstra will not have any requirements to maintain service to rural and regional areas. Just because the Howard government has suggested that it will give money to rural areas, that is not going to guarantee that this service will be equal to or as cheap as the service in major cities. I find that very concerning, and so do the people that I represent in this parliament. I say to members on the other side of this House that, if they listened to the people that they represent, they would know that these people are very concerned about this sale.

It seems strange to me that the government would push through the full sale of Telstra without proper debate. There were a number of members in this House who wished to speak on this piece of legislation. When 70 per cent of Australians were opposed to the full sale of Telstra, the government gagged debate. Under this government, the cost of line rentals has increased, average prices paid by residential and small business customers have increased and Australian telecommunications prices are the fifth highest in the world.

There is one issue that I would like to put on the table during this debate, and that is the issue raised by Mr Norm Harland of Harrison Street, Belmont North relating to the problem that people in the Shortland electorate are having in accessing the Telstra broadband service. This issue will show how poor the service is and how ludicrous the current situation is. In the street that Mr Harland lives in, Harrison Street, the residents at Nos 59 to 71 cannot receive broadband but those at Nos 55 to 73 can. Telstra has been approached, and I received a letter from Telstra saying that their investigations had revealed that the service is not currently connected to BigPond and that if Mr Harland had a BigPond connection then maybe things would improve. Telstra also said that they understand that there are some questions as to why some residents can access ADSL and others cannot. The letter says:

Telstra has a legislated responsibility ... It then says:

We regret that ADSL is not available to some residents at this time. Telstra is well aware of the demand for ADSL in the area and has been working with the community towards providing a solution.

The letter suggests:

Customers who are experiencing technical difficulties need to raise these issues with their current service provider ...

That is exactly what Mr Harland did. Upon receipt of the letter, he contacted Optus, his service provider, and spoke to Optus Sales about getting ADSL on his home phone. Optus checked on the LOLO database for his home phone number, and it revealed that the
transmission losses were too high and that DSL was not supported at any speed available. Mr Harland checked further, but was told that for legal reasons they were unable to provide a letter stating this. So on the one hand Telstra is saying that the information is there, and on the other hand Mr Harland is unable to get it. All the checking showed that, no matter what Mr Harland did, he was not going to be able to access the broadband service. To me, this is very poor service. People have been treated arrogantly, and there is absolutely no promise by the government that they are going to help people in the Shortland electorate. All I can see for the people that I represent in this parliament are poorer services and higher prices.

I would like to take this opportunity to highlight my concerns about the full sale of Telstra. To me, this is the model for the way the government is going to handle legislation within this parliament. It has no respect whatsoever for the Australian people, and it is arrogantly and blatantly ignoring their wishes and pushing through legislation without proper debate, without proper consultation and without properly informing the Australian people about their legislation and agenda. *(Time expired)*

**Queensland Public Hospital System**

Mr **NEVILLE** (Hinkler) (5.26 pm)—A new oxymoron has entered our language: the phrase ‘Queensland public hospital system’, and I draw your attention to the word ‘public’. I think most of us would be familiar with the crisis that has crippled the Queensland hospital system—chronic underfunding, medical staff shortages, bed closures and crumbling infrastructure. Premier Peter Beattie and his Labor government have destroyed what was once a well-run and functional health system, and now plan to prop it up with—wait for it—poker machines, more taxes for home buyers and means testing for public hospital patients. And, oh, he has dropped the other one—to charge an interstate tax to come across the border.

Under the Beattie Labor regime, Queensland’s hospitals have been consistently underfunded to the tune of $600 million a year, while the number of bureaucrats in the Queensland health system has increased by 83 per cent in just seven years. Earlier this year, the national Productivity Commission released figures which also support my argument. The report showed that Queensland has the worst public hospital outcomes in Australia, with short stays, lack of rehabilitation services and chronic underfunding.

These problems and the Beattie government’s solutions are now legendary. When you get into a tight corner, instead of attacking the core problem, you go out and create another level of bureaucracy to supposedly filter out the problem. Invariably, this attempt to smother troubles with paperwork creates even more conflict, with territorial jealousies, buck passing, blame shifting and an inability to get to the root of the problem.

Theoretically, under the Labor health system there are a whole host of mechanisms to arrest a situation such as the Dr Patel scenario in Bundaberg, but few if any of them ever get to the point of implementation. In this territorial patch-protecting environment, paralysis sets in: nothing happens and bureaucrats at each level defend their own positions, defend their own patch, dumb down the incident, shoot the messenger and threaten the potential whistleblower—all of which came out in the royal commission.

On 19 October, Queenslanders finally found out how Mr Beattie plans to dig himself out of this hole. He outlined his plans promising an extra $1.5 billion a year in hospital funding. Where will this funding come from? Mr Beattie is taking a three-pronged approach. He is going to charge home buyers
an increased transfer duty in the form of stamp duty of between 0.25 per cent and 0.75 per cent on properties above $500,000, estimated to bring in around $100 million a year.

The Beattie government also plans to draw an estimated $55 million from 1,000 new poker machines. On this point I have a few asides to make. What sort of stability is the Queensland government offering in this public health system, let alone in general public good governance, when the best that Mr Beattie can come up with to prop up his health system is to put in more poker machines? The fact is that other states are cutting back on poker machines because they know that a greater number of machines correlates to increased gambling. The corollary to this is the knowledge that the introduction of more machines will create more gambling, more social problems and perhaps even health problems associated with the gamblers. It becomes a vicious circle.

The third revenue-raising method introduced by the Labor government will be the means testing—wait for it—of public hospitals. In a nutshell, rather than investing Queensland’s $7 billion-plus GST revenue in fixing up the Queensland hospital system, Mr Beattie intends to make people with private health insurance pay for the health services over and over again. Mr Beattie confirmed that wealthier patients, expected to be those earning over $33,000 a year, will now be forced to make a co-contribution.

Let us analyse this. When you pay your Medicare levy, you pay 1½ per cent of your income. If you earn more than $50,000 and you do not have private health insurance, you pay another one per cent—or 2½ per cent—not just on the incremental amount, I might add, but on the total amount. So, let us take a person on a modest $55,000. They could be paying 2½ per cent of that total amount and be told: ‘Not only are you going to pay your Medicare levy of 1½ per cent, not only are you going to pay your surcharge of one per cent, but on top of that, when you come into a public hospital, we’re going to charge you again’—a triple whammy.

Now, I do not know whether it is legal—I doubt that it is legal—but I say to Mr Beattie today: Medicare gives every Australian the right to free treatment as a public patient in a public hospital. Medicare had its genesis in the original Medibank. Mr Whitlam insisted that all states were required to come into it. After some very tough negotiations with Joh Bjelke-Petersen, an agreement was reached for Queensland to come into it. Queensland was paid a very generous offset at that time to recognise what it had already put into free hospitals.

People with private health insurance have to pay more again: a single person could pay anything from $1,400 to $1,600; and a married couple anything from $2,800 to just under $4,000 if they have all the extras. Stripping the rights of people with private health insurance is not only illegal under the Australian health care agreement but totally contrary to the principles of Medicare, and it is contrary to the concept of a free hospital system, which was always Queensland’s proud boast.

Just last week, a constituent rang my office and clearly defined his circumstances under the new system. Under the Beattie plan, he said, a private health insurance holder who pays a Medicare levy to the Commonwealth and his mandatory $90.20 ambulance levy—that is another little Queensland plus that the Beattie government has introduced via electricity accounts—will be denied free medical treatment in a Queensland public hospital. That is almost incredible. My constituent was quite rightly outraged.
I wonder what former state premiers would think of this so-called plan, because Queensland’s public health system never used to be like this. In 1944, Labor Premier Ned Hanlon implemented a free hospital system which gave all people access to doctors at a reasonable fee and free health care in a government hospital. The scheme continued under the coalition and Labor governments under the premierships of Gair, Nicklin, Pizzey, Chalk, Bjelke-Petersen, Ahern and Cooper, but it started to unravel with the Goss government.

The Goss Labor government destroyed the hospital boards—which, I might add, was the start of the Patel business. There was no internal check other than the bureaucratic maze that I described to you before. Premier Goss established 13 regional health authorities with up to 30 employees in each. In other words, it was the Goss Labor government which established this new and totally unnecessary layer of bureaucracy, loading up the system with another 300 to 400 professionals and administrators. It was Wayne Goss who shamelessly brought this about, while trying to camouflage his actions by attaching himself to the legacy of the free hospital service. In fact, I quite clearly remember in the Courier-Mail a photograph of Wayne Goss standing beside the full-sized statue of Ned Hanlon outside the women’s unit of the Royal Brisbane Hospital. Mr Goss claimed in the associated article that he did not compare himself with Ned Hanlon—no, he would never do that!—but the clear message from the photo was that Labor was continuing the proud Hanlon tradition.

Now we see a Labor Premier intent not only on fudging it, as Goss did, but on actually ending the tradition. I think that every Labor member in this House should cringe to think that the once proud system that a proud and caring Labor Premier brought in is now in tatters. And they should not be blaming the Commonwealth government, because no state has done better out of Medicare than Queensland.

Who would have thought that a Labor government would kill off Medicare in Queensland, when it was the Labor governments I spoke about before that were the genesis of a free hospital system? And who would have thought that we would have seen a state Labor Premier try to offload responsibility for public hospitals to the Commonwealth, as we did just a matter of weeks ago? At one stage he offered the whole Queensland public hospital system to the Commonwealth—a total dereliction of duty and a total winding down of that proud tradition.

I come from Bundaberg, and I have seen the worst of the worst in a hospital of which I was once a board member, before we had these ineffectual health councils. To see what has happened in Queensland and to see this new overlay of measures to try to scramble out of it absolutely incenses me. It offends me to my core.

Myanmar

Mr LAURIE FERGUSON (Reid) (5.36 pm)—Perchance last evening I heard a BBC program about multiculturalism around the world and race issues. After they covered the problems of Bradford in the United Kingdom, and particularly conflict involving those of Anglo-Saxon extraction and those from the Indian subcontinent, I was surprised to hear them switch to the suburb of Auburn in my electorate when they turned to the Australian picture. They quite correctly said that if there is any suburb in Australia that characterises multiculturalism and the absorption of many peoples, it is this suburb.

As I might have said on previous occasions, this area is characterised not only by a high non-English-speaking background population but, more importantly, by recent arrivals. Even if I did not have an interest in
these matters, this occasions a deep involvement with a variety of communities and their issues. Thus last Monday I found myself with Senator Kerry Nettle and Arthur Chesterfield-Evans from the New South Wales upper house—from the Greens and the Democrats, respectively—in attendance at a demonstration by Burmese citizens of Sydney in relation to the continuing suppression of human rights in their country.

At the outset I want to congratulate a number of people who relentlessly pursue these matters in Sydney. I mention Maung Maung Than from my electorate; Myint Cho, also from Auburn; Maisie Warburton, who is currently employed in the New South Wales parliament education unit, a person who has been extremely active on these matters for decades; and Terrell Oung, whose efforts are partially financed through the Labour Council of New South Wales. Those four people are an instance of the deep, abiding activity of this community. The rally was around the continued incarceration of Aung San Suu Kyi in particular, and also the large number of people persistently suppressed and jailed under the regime in Burma. As far back as December 2000, the foreign minister of that country, Win Aung, said:

We don’t have violations of human rights ... I am not afraid to face this sort of criticism.

He talked of releasing Aung San Suu Kyi at ‘the appropriate time’. On a number of occasions she was released until things become too hot for the regime again. Essentially, over a 15-year period she has rarely been out of incarceration or home arrest.

We are talking about a regime which is an international pariah. It is associated with the narcotics trade and provides support for growers and distributors. It has been universally abhorred in relation to torture. At the moment it has in the area of 1,400—there might be some debate; it might be 1,300—political prisoners. The country is characterised by a studied disregard for international opinion. As well as unfair trials, it has incommunicado detention.

The regime is propped up by the activities of China in particular, because of Burma’s provision of oil, timber and natural gas resources to China. China’s role internationally in regard to criticism of the regime has been extremely poor. When we talk about the natural products I have mentioned, we should not restle from the reality that the resources are utilised for a narrow clique in the country. This is a part of the reason why those people are essentially interested in maintaining power. The current SPDC is a continuation of a military regime which has now been in power for four decades—occasionally relenting and having elections, but, when it was unsuccessful, clamping down again with suppression.

It was a sorry day in 1997 when ASEAN relented, against international criticism, and allowed Burma to join the organisation. That was in sharp contrast to the attitudes of the North Americans and Europeans in regard to whether the regime should be accepted in international councils. However, I am pleased to note that continuing international pressure was such that, when Burma was entitled to chairmanship of ASEAN, it was politely led to understand that it was not to take up that chairmanship. A few countries in our region—the Philippines in particular, and to some degree Thailand and Singapore—were amongst those that mounted pressure and expressed criticism. It should be said, however, that in recent years Thailand has not taken an exemplary position in regard to the regime. It has systematically sought to expel or push out large numbers of Burmese refugees; it has made it very difficult for them. It is sending them back to a group of people who are not exactly Mr Nice Guy in...
regard to how they treat failed claimants who are sent back.

As I said earlier, the regime had a studied disregard of outside opinion despite statements by its foreign minister. Mr Lallah and his successor Mr Pinheiro, who were special rapporteurs for the United Nations commission for human rights, had grave difficulties in trying to hold investigations in the country. When Mr Pinheiro went to interview people in Burma, it was discovered that a microphone was hidden in the meeting place. That is indicative of the situation. There was a United Nations investigator into human rights in the country, and people in Burma even had to monitor him and his staff when they came before them.

In December 2003, on behalf of the UK government, Baroness Symons said:

United Kingdom pressure will be maintained until Burma is irreversibly committed to substantive, lasting political change.

There have been EU sanctions. They had been strengthened in April 2003 despite fierce opposition from Thailand. Thailand believes that things are not too bad in downtown Rangoon.

In June 2003, the United States upped its restrictions on the regime, particularly in relation to imports from Burma. That created serious problems for the regime, particularly with textiles. The United States government took the action because, as the US state department was to say a few months later, in February 2004, there was a highly authoritative regime and a pervasive security apparatus.

We have seen mounting and continuing international activity against the Burmese regime. In this parliament there is a cross-party group that has continued to be active. Australia has not exactly been a leading light in regard to these matters. Its decision that this was a regime that we could have a few nice little discussions with in relation to how to acclimatise their personnel and public servants to human rights recognition was not exactly welcomed by people who maintain the rage against the regime.

I would hope that we can play a bigger role in putting pressure on Burma. It is clearly one of those cases where discussions and nice words have accomplished nothing. It is a serious matter. There is suppression of unions and banning of political parties—in particular, the National League for Democracy, which won the last elections and whose leader is in jail. The regime in Burma suppresses minority rights. Burma has a large number of ethnic minority groups, some of which have their own organisations in Sydney, over and above the mainstream Burmese associations, which campaign for democracy. Many of those ethnic minorities have had their land seized for national projects—for infrastructure and for the development of resources—which, as I said earlier, is essentially to the gain of the regime's leading players. As reported by the International Labour Organisation—a tripartite organisation of labour, government and employers—it is a country characterised by a high level of forced labour.

At the weekend, the Burmese Buddhist Vihara Institute at Yennora, just outside my electorate, held an 80th birthday celebration for the venerable Sayadaw Sagara. Once again, Vihara is an institution of some importance in the Burmese community, which I have had the pleasure of being associated with on many occasions. I reiterate my support for the people who keep the issue of human rights in Burma high in the public mind.

Bonner Electorate: Investing in Our Schools Program

Mr VASTA (Bonner) (5.46 pm)—I rise to speak about the many school communities
within the Bonner electorate with which I have had close contact throughout my first year as their federal representative. Both state and private school communities have worked extremely hard during 2005, and I believe they deserve commendation and acknowledgement of their efforts. After my election to parliament in late 2004, I made it one of my first priorities to visit every school in the Bonner electorate in January 2005. This gave me the opportunity not only to introduce myself but also to personally brief each principal about the government’s Investing in Our Schools Program. Overall, the program was extremely well received and it was clear that a large majority of the state schools, in particular, had very basic and essential infrastructure needs that had escaped the state government’s priority list. Principals and teachers were easily and quickly able to identify capital projects that their school communities desperately needed.

As the year progressed, it was interesting to note the schools that had subsequently responded to the program’s call for applications in the first round of funding. After having regularly emailed the schools with updates and further clarifications on the program, I was finally able to review a number of the school communities’ submissions. I was thoroughly impressed by the projects, which had been carefully planned and clearly justified as being necessary for those individual schools. It was a wonderful experience to write many letters of support for the various applications because, having personally visited each of the schools, I was well aware of the enormous benefit that would result from each of the projects were they able to be funded. Just as importantly, it was clear that the schools and their P&Cs had worked together enthusiastically in the hope of gaining the much needed funds for improvements that some schools and their P&Cs had been working towards for a number of years.

I wish to acknowledge, in particular, Darling Point Special School, a bayside school in my electorate, which caters for students with disabilities aged five to 18, providing them with outstanding care and education tailored to their individual needs. Integrated with the community, the school is well respected and appreciated for what it has been able to achieve for those students, who require very special attention. The principal of the school, Ms Charmaine Driver, responded exceptionally well to the Investing in Our Schools Program and prepared an excellent submission that proposed both the installation of airconditioning and the development of a sensory room that would cater to the unique educational needs of the school’s students. Ms Driver was able to present such an effective proposal because she took the time to meet with her local representatives—including me—to discuss her plans and share her ideas on what she thought would be the very best outcomes for the students at Darling Point Special School. I understand also that Ms Driver utilised effectively the program’s hotline for constructive advice. In these ways, she was able to gain valuable input and, ultimately, to secure funding for improvements that will significantly benefit the students and their families.

In September it gave me great pleasure to receive advice from Minister Nelson as to which schools in the electorate were successful in their applications for first-round funding. Seven local state primary schools will receive thousands of dollars in funding from this government to assist them in facilitating the best education possible for our children. The response from the schools was overwhelming and, as a new member who had worked so closely with each of them, I found it an extremely rewarding experience to de-
liver news that meant so much to each of the communities.

Today I wish to recognise the seven schools that will receive funding and, in particular, to commend the following principals and their P&C bodies on the outstanding proposals that can now, with the assistance of these grants, be implemented. Ms Charmaine Driver, principal of Darling Point Special School, will receive $71,992 to install airconditioning and develop a sensory room. Mr Ray Kiely, principal of Lindum State School, will receive $47,650 to develop a much needed resource centre and courtyard cultural area. Mr Dan Crowley, principal of Manly State School, will receive $29,915 to install a rigid shade annexe. Mr Allan Kuskie, principal of Mount Gravatt State School, will receive $48,000 to establish a fully furnished and secure technology centre. Mr Rob Cathcart, principal of Mount Gravatt West Special School, will receive $48,421 to develop a life skills centre for students, to encourage independent living. Mr Andrew Maclean, principal of Old Yarranlea State School, will receive $18,766 to improve playground shading, upgrade the oval fence netting and install weatherproof blinds. Mr Noel Walker, principal of Wishart State School, will receive $25,650 for the provision of classroom furniture.

These principals and their hard-working P&Cs are truly deserving of this assistance, and it is clear that the government recognises the importance of providing schools with facilities that will enhance the education and wellbeing of students. The Investing in Our Schools Program has been of particular interest to me as it allows members to involve themselves with their local schools and gain a greater understanding of the community views that are critical to improving and enhancing their children’s education and school experience.

Although some schools were unsuccessful in the first round of funding, it cannot be discounted that the need is there for assistance, and I will be continuing to encourage schools to apply in each round of funding. This program has been complemented by a number of other government initiatives this year, including grants of up to $1,500 being made available to individual schools to purchase or repair a flag pole. This initiative has again facilitated the opportunity to meet with schools and share in the raising of the Australian flag—a ritual which students can now take a renewed pride in.

I take this opportunity to also recognise a school with which I have had regular contact and which I recently visited to celebrate the installation of their new flag pole and the official raising of the flag. Wynnum West State School, although unsuccessful in their first application for funding, has responded enthusiastically to each government program and initiative. The principal, Ms Debbie Bradley, and the students are quite exceptional and have shown me particular welcome since I have taken on the role as their local federal representative. For this I owe the school my sincerest gratitude and I will continue to support their community in any way that I can.

Local schools are a significant part of each local community. It is important that they remain closely connected with their government representatives so that the very best outcomes for the students and their families can be achieved.

Chifley Electorate: Murawina Child-Care Centre

Mr PRICE (Chifley) (5.54 pm)—Today I want to raise a couple of matters in the grievance debate. I will start with the Murawina Child-Care Centre in Mount Druitt—not the one in Redfern—which is a maxifunded Aboriginal child-care centre. My first in-
volvement with the centre occurred nearly 20 years ago when it was located in Janet Street, Mount Druitt—the same street that I grew up in. We were very successful in getting some council land, which was ultimately bought by ATSIC, and the Murawina Child-Care Centre was constructed there.

As a federal member, through the years I have been very proud of the child-care centre and all that it contributed to my community in Mount Druitt. Alas, things have deteriorated somewhat from those days. After being approached by the chief executive officer of the child-care centre we had a meeting in my office about the centre’s financial difficulties, its inability to finalise some audits and its need for extra money—and therein unravelled a tale.

Initially, I had great difficulty communicating with the federal Department of Family and Community Services about this matter. After I sent a pretty strong letter to the minister and had a discussion with her, my relationship with the Department of Family and Community Services has been terrific. They have been out to quite a number of community meetings in Mount Druitt, as I have.

Prior to Christmas last year, there was an exchange of letters between the Murawina Child-Care Centre and the Department of Family and Community Services and, in an unusual move, the Commonwealth agreed to a special payment, an extra payment, of some $56,000. The purpose of that payment was to ensure that all the workers at Murawina were paid the wages, salaries and holiday pay owed to them. The payment was made by the Commonwealth, but sadly the workers did not receive it. In addition, it has been very difficult to determine the amount of the deficit in relation to the Murawina Child-Care Centre. Initially I had understood that the deficiency varied from $200,000 to $300,000. I now understand that the amount of money could be as much as $800,000.

This is not a situation where a board of directors, inadvertently, through lack of experience and understanding, have got themselves into a problem and wish to pursue the best available course out of that problem and continue to deliver the service. Since the Commonwealth stopped funding the child-care centre, which was before the end of last year, the centre has operated on a voluntary basis. The Office of Fair Trading has sought to intervene legally for the appointment of a liquidator. The appointment of a liquidator would facilitate a so-called forensic audit of the centre, which would allow us to determine just where all the money has gone.

I have had discussions with the community on a number of occasions and also with the department. It is fair to say that there is a great willingness, if not determination, to try to ensure that the child-care services that Murawina previously provided are provided so that Mount Druitt gets back its Aboriginal child-care centre. Unfortunately, every legal avenue is being taken to frustrate this happening. In fact, the latest was on Monday, 21 October. I nearly went into the Supreme Court myself just to sit down and witness what was happening. I am pleased to say that I did not do so, because the application by the Office of Fair Trading—which was the result of an adjournment in order to allow Murawina to raise more money—occurred in chambers. So the justice that we were looking for was operating behind closed doors and no-one could see what it was that was being determined. I now understand there has been a further adjournment of proceedings until 21 November.

The adjournment has been granted in the first instance on the basis of Murawina’s ability to raise extra money and have the Dharug Medical Centre take them over. As a
consequence of the undertaking given to the Supreme Court about this matter, Murawina management hired a firm of debt collectors and issued statements of claim and statements of liquidated claims to parents who have used the child care centre that has been operating on a voluntary basis. I think I can reasonably assert there is not one wit of evidence that would underpin any of the amounts of money that these parents are being hit with. The amounts of money have varied between $2,000 and, in the case of a volunteer who had a child at the child-care centre, $6,500. These amounts of money are hotly and keenly disputed. Notwithstanding that, already some parents have paid that amount of money.

I have now formally lodged some complaints. At the community meeting tonight I hope there will be more complaints lodged about what I would call these fictitious bills. But the Office of Fair Trading is taking the attitude that it will not investigate these statements of claim and statements of liquidated claim, even though the complaint forms have been properly lodged, because it may be a conflict of its role. That is an absolute outrage.

I have written to the taxation commissioner about the moneys that were paid for wages, amounts owing and in relation to the superannuation of those workers that he should undertake an investigation. I am very sorry to say that, in relation to my complaint, the Commissioner of Taxation has written and said that these individuals will need to respond by lodging complaints. So I say to any of those workers employed by the Murawina child-care centre: please ring 131020, the superannuation business service line, and please formally lodge a complaint.

The board of Murawina are asking the Commonwealth to lift the caveat on the land—I urge the Commonwealth not to. They expect that the Commonwealth will automatically refund them—I urge the Commonwealth not to. I say to the board: stop holding the community of Mount Druitt to ransom. You are denying us a proper and fully-funded child-care centre for the children of the community. Let us get on and ensure that that is the primary object, not the current board maintaining its position and the current management being further employed. The most important thing we need is for the court to be satisfied that there is no prospect of Murawina getting out of its $800,000 hole, appoint the liquidator, have the forensic audit and let the Commonwealth and state departments start getting a proper child-care centre up and running at the earliest possible moment.

**Russian Federation: Foster’s Advertisement**

**Child Care**

Miss Jackie Kelly (Lindsay) (6.00 pm)—I have a couple of grievances to raise this evening, one relating to a delegation to Russia and Italy in which I participated. The report for that delegation was tabled in the Senate on 23 June this year, and I endorsed that report. I would like to make some further comments regarding an ad by an Australian company that was heavily used throughout the Russian Federation. It is a Foster’s ad and, as most Australians know, Foster’s is one of our major name brand products that are known internationally. In the advertising campaign Foster’s are trying to corner the Russian beer drinking market by using a tiny bikini top on top of a very large bikini bottom with the words ‘The law of life’ and then a large bikini top on top of a tiny bikini top,
basically the law of Foster’s, with the encouragement for Russians to live the Australian way. I do not think Foster’s would get away with an ad like that in Australia. It is incumbent on us to shame our major brand products into not doing so overseas and thereby giving the wrong impression about Australian females to our international relations. Mr Deputy Speaker, I seek leave to table a copy of the offending ad and open that up for discussion.

Leave granted.

Miss Jackie Kelly—Thank you. The other matter that I wish to raise tonight is something which I obviously feel qualified to speak on now that I have one child at school and I am still paying for child care for the other. Having struggled with the issue myself, I would like to pave the way for females in the future on the topical subject of work-family balance, on which there has been a number of documents and publications. One of the ones that I like is Striking the balance: women, men, work and family. It is a discussion paper put out this year by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission. It covers a number of activities such as unpaid work around the house and how, when we are single, men and females tend to do the same amount of work around the house, although females do a few minutes extra each day. But, once we partner and become married, men tend to spend more time in paid work and less time doing unpaid work around the home and women tend to do more unpaid work around the home as well as their paid work. Women do a lot more caring and have a hands-on role with children. But males do more than females at playtime and interact more with their children, such as reading to them. So females tend to do more of the bathing, feeding, cooking and cleaning and men have more of the hands-on role. Females spend a substantially greater number of hours each day or week solely in charge of children compared to males.

This leads me to some other interesting figures. Of the 2.8 million part-time workers in Australia in 2005, 70 per cent are female and only 29 per cent male. When you look at that figure, you see that obviously part-time work favours females, especially mums—they can juggle part-time work and their roles around the home. But, of couples with children under five, only 31 per cent of mothers participate in part-time work whereas, once the children are five to nine years of age, there is a jump to 40 per cent. Clearly, mums go back into the work force once the children turn five. Similarly, there is a definite rise in the percentage of females in full-time employment as their children get older, with a dramatic decline in employment for females aged 55, which is another issue. This is an interesting trend. From 1911 to the 1940s, between 25 and 30 per cent of females were traditionally in the work force. With the abolition of the Marriage Act, the bar was lifted in the sixties and, by 1985, 45 per cent of women with children were employed. In 2003, 60 per cent of women with children were employed. If you compare that to the 80 per cent of women with children who are employed in Sweden, the 67 per cent in the US and the 62 per cent in the UK, you see we obviously have some work to do if that trend is to continue.

Who is raising the children? The statistics for the year 2002 show that 787,400 formal care places were used and that 48 per cent of those were work related—in other words, 378,739 places were work related. However, 1,019,200 children used informal care and 46 per cent of that was work related—in other words, 471,889 places were work related. So we have a significant amount of work related child care, both formal and informal. From 1998 until 2004, $8.8 billion was spent on child care by the federal government, which
was double the amount Labor spent in its last six years in office. Over the next four years this government will be spending $9.1 billion.

What I would like to look at is the possible innovation in the way we deliver child care. We have a number of federal options. The federal government only fund child care which qualifies for CCB payments. In other words, we do not fund preschools or informal care; we only fund out of school hours care, long day care, family day care, occasional care and other types of care such as multifunction Aboriginal children’s services, multiple care services and in-home care. I understand that the minister is looking at other care and ways of providing it. But at the moment the 239,100 preschool places do not qualify for long day care funding—in other words, there is no CCB for those. That is a significant discouragement for parents who are working, studying or training and who only need the care from nine till three. They would prefer to use long day care rather than a preschool. Although the preschool would cost only $33 and long day care would cost, say, $50, there is an incentive for them to use long day care and charge the federal government for the long day care place rather than the preschool place. If you are part time, you get a 110 per cent rebate versus the full-time rebate, which has a maximum of about 100 per cent. So there are some inequities in the way we offer child-care assistance versus what actually happens with the choices that females make. I would like to make it really clear that it is not a part time woman’s, a full-time woman’s or a non-working, stay-at-home woman’s issue. We are talking about the same woman, a woman who is working full time and has had a child. She was at home full time, went back to part-time work and is now in full-time work. It is the same woman, and to try to cause some sort of division in this is not recognising what actually happens.

Let us look at the business case for what actually happens. In order to qualify as a long day care place and offer your clients the federal government subsidies, you have to be open for a certain number of hours. In order to provide that care, you need to guarantee that those hours are covered. So, as a business case, the parents must pay for that full day whether they use it or not. Most long day care centres operate on a 55-hour week. By the exclusion of preschools, we are seeing funds expended for 11 hours a day that are not necessarily being used. Adding to that, we have a schedule fee, which is currently $140. If you can get child care for five days in Sydney for $140, let me know. It has increased from the $122 it was in 2001, but the schedule fee certainly needs to be looked at, as do the percentages against the schedule fee for which CCB payments are made.

(Time expired)

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. DGH Adams)—I put the question:

That grievances be noted.

Question agreed to.

PRIVILEGE

Mr SCHULTZ (Hume) (6.15 pm)—Mr Deputy Speaker, I seek the indulgence of the House on a matter of privilege. The matter of privilege centres on the improper interference with the free performance of my duties as a member of the House of Representatives. On Friday, 28 October 2005 between the hours of 5 pm and 10.05 pm an unknown person, in collaboration with other persons, hacked illegally into the answering service within my Goulburn electorate office. When I say ‘other persons’, in the voice mail that was put onto my answering machine there is noise in the background and the voice of a female saying, ‘You did that well.’ So I raise a point that it is not just an individual but a
number of people. The person removed my personal voice mail from my answering machine from a remote location. In other words, the answering service within my office was accessed from outside my office.

They not only removed my personal voice mail, which is a normal salutation from a member of parliament to his constituents who ring in out of hours, but replaced it with an obscene voice mail greeting and, to compound the issue, did so in an environment where they were impersonating me by using my name. I will not read out the text of what was put onto that answering machine, but I will table the press release from a Sydney Morning Herald journalist who was alerted to the message being put onto that answering machine, I assume by the person who put it on the night in question. The reason for the 10.05 pm cut-off was that was the time that the journalist rang and left a message on my answering machine at the office in my home at Cootamundra where I fund an office out of my own pocket.

Two things are disturbing about this. There is an absolute risk that members of parliament, regardless of what side of the House they come from or what political persuasion they are, can have their offices accessed and the security broken within the office by an individual or individuals external to that office. Where does that leave me, and indeed other parliamentarians, in being confident that the personal files that we have on our computers are not able to be accessed? Where does that leave us as members of parliament when our constituents ring in hoping to talk to the member or leave a message on the member’s answering machine to be confronted with and be forced to listen to obscene language of this nature? I do not want to point a finger at where the message came from or why it was put there, but it was centred on industrial relations policy. I will leave the experts to do their investigations at a later date to find out not only who the person was but why that particular issue was raised.

I believe that, whilst we operate in a volatile and sometimes robust system in this place, members of parliament such as I should not be subjected to that sort of manipulation in the way we treat our constituency and, more importantly, our role as members should not be usurped illegally to the point where our constituents are put in very difficult situations. I thank the House for allowing me the opportunity to raise this issue. I think the matter should be raised with the Privileges Committee. In my opinion, it is a blatant illegal abuse not only of my privilege as a member of parliament but certainly of the telecommunications system and, more importantly, the laws relating to telecommunications at the federal level. It is certainly a problem in fraudulently using my name and my identity to convey a false message to my constituents. I thank the House for their indulgence.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. DGH Adams)—You are seeking leave to table a document?

Mr SCHULTZ—I am.

Leave granted.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER—The matter will be passed on to the Speaker.
ASBESTOS-RELATED CLAIMS
(MANAGEMENT OF
COMMONWEALTH LIABILITIES)
BILL 2005

ASBESTOS-RELATED CLAIMS
(MANAGEMENT OF
COMMONWEALTH LIABILITIES)
(CONSEQUENTIAL AND
TRANSITIONAL PROVISIONS)
BILL 2005

AUSTRALIAN TECHNICAL
COLLEGES (FLEXIBILITY IN
ACHIEVING AUSTRALIA’S SKILLS
NEEDS) BILL 2005

MEDICAL INDEMNITY
(COMpetitive ADVantage
PAYMENT) BILL 2005

MEDICAL INDEMNITY
LEGISLATION
AMENDMENT (COMPETITIVE
NEUTRALITY) BILL 2005

Assent

Message from the Administrator reported
informing the House of assent to the bills.

NATIONAL HEALTH AMENDMENT
(BUDGET MEASURES—
PHARMACEUTICAL BENEFITS
SAFETY NET) BILL 2005

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 13 October, on
motion by Mr Pyne:

That this bill be now read a second time.

upon which Ms Gillard 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:

(1) failing to invest in the long term sustainabil-
yty of the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme;

(2) failing to tell the Australian public at the last
election that additional changes to the PBS
safety net and patient co-payment were
planned in addition to the 21% increase in

co-payments and safety nets introduced last
January;

(3) continuing to implement changes to the PBS
despite the fact that PBS growth rates have
already slowed substantially and despite the
fact that these changes will hit the poorest
and sickest Australians;

(4) failing to ensure that the 20 day restriction
rule contains sufficient exemptions to cover
situations that will arise regularly to require
people to get their prescriptions filled inside
that timeframe; and

(5) providing further opportunities for the Minis-
ter for Health and Ageing to intervene to
limit the availability of medicines on the
PBS.”

Mr Hatton (Blaxland) (6.21 pm)—
Before I was so rudely interrupted by the
intervention of question time on the last day
of sitting, I was dealing with the substantive
elements of the National Health Amendment
(Budget Measures—Pharmaceutical Benefits
Safety Net) Bill 2005 and the specific provi-
sions covered in the bill where changes are
to be made. The core of those changes, I reit-
erate, is to change the way in which people
have their safety net dealt with—changes
coming into place next year and further
changes the year after that and the year after
that. The core of those changes is to raise the
number of prescriptions that are necessary for pensioners or concession card holders to
reach the safety net. They will need to have
more prescriptions per year—an extra two
next year and then for the next couple of
years after that another two—and it will take
them longer before they reach the safety net.
Similarly, people who are not concession
card holders will have to pay more before
they reach the point of the safety net.

The government’s argument here can be
summed up in this way. Based upon the
Treasurer’s Intergenerational Report,
whereas about 12½ per cent are aged now,
the expectation is that about 25 per cent of
the population will be aged when the baby boomers enter the aged area, with a resultant increase in health costs. In order to make the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme sustainable, it is necessary to introduce a series of measures. The measures here are that the number of scripts be raised that would need to be obtained at full cost or at full concessional cost. These changes are in conjunction with those brought in last January: a 21 per cent increase in the price paid by full-paying patients and by concession card holders. A 21 per cent increase makes it more expensive to buy medicines because the copayment is increased by that amount and, with that, is the additional number of scripts that people have to get. The Howard government says that the provisions of this bill:

... will help to rebalance the way costs for the PBS are shared between the Commonwealth government and individuals to reflect a fair contribution by patients to the cost of the PBS at the point of sale.

I think that the case is that there was a fair apportionment of costs between individual patients and the Commonwealth prior to the changes the government made in January. Those changes were disproportionate, and this bill goes further because it imposes an even greater cost on people, whether they are paying full rate or concessional rate, since not only are they paying 21 per cent more as of January but they are paying more for longer, at a rate of two prescriptions per year over the next three years.

So the effect of this bill, combined with what happened last January, is to create a Clayton’s safety net. It is a Clayton’s safety net because it is really not going to be one. The people who were supposed to be protected by the pharmaceutical benefits safety net will be protected no longer. They are faced not only with a 21 per cent increase on all of the prescriptions that they have to buy but with an increasing number. At the moment an individual or family pays $874.90, which is a substantial amount of money and a substantial number of scripts, on the basis of $28.60 per script or 52 scripts per year currently for concession card holders. The whole point and purpose of having the safety net is so that there is some cut-off point where people should not have to continue to pay the full freight because of the necessity of their circumstances or because of a recognition of the fact that the Commonwealth at large will take account of the extra costs over and above for people who had a great need.

But this bill goes further. It says that once you have reached the increased level of prescriptions—54, then 56, then 58—or, in the case of individuals, once you have paid the equivalent of that in money terms, once you have reached what should be the safety net, if you then get another script within a 20-day period—guess what—you pay the full freight of $28.60 in current terms or you pay the full freight of $4.60 for people on a concession basis. What is the effect of that? There is no safety net. For those people who are monetarily in difficulties, where the safety net was supposed to protect them because they were poor or indigent or otherwise—the general impact on individuals or families was so great that a safety net had to be brought in in the first place—the effect is that they have a choice: either they pay the full rate after they have reached the safety net point within that 20-day period or they go without the medicine.

When I was speaking two weeks ago I made a simple point based on my own experience, and my experience is also the experience of others. If you have a particular condition that requires you to use medication and you decide not to have the medication because it is going to cost you the extra amount of money or you decide you cannot have this medication because it is not within the 20-day period, the luxury of having that
medication may make a big difference. In my situation I get cold sores in the eye. I have had them twice. I get them around the eye and they could spread to the eye. To fix that problem, when you get an ulceration of the eye because of a cold sore, takes a minimum of seven weeks treatment. The seven-week treatment is the application of the best medicine—and that is Zovirax which contains aciclovir—at a cost of $28.60 each, but you have to administer that four to five times a day and you have to do it for a minimum of five days. In fact, if you are in the seven-week period, you have to do it for seven weeks straight. This legislation says, ‘If you have reached the safety net point you can pay $28.60.’ I can pay it, but there are a lot of people in my situation who are affected by it where $28.60 is definitely material to the whole concern of their family. If you do not take the medicine properly, and it also involves going to a specialist to get the condition fixed up, you can experience what happened to me, even though I had the medication: you can actually lose more of your sight. A percentage of your sight can be lost if the medication is not available.

So there are practical considerations here that this legislation does not take into account or refuses to acknowledge. In the same way, if a person is travelling and they seek to get an extra prescription made up because they need that prescription medication while they are travelling, this legislation just says: ‘Tough luck. Go and pay the extra amount of money.’ You could have a family living on the edge and that could be the difference between being able to pay the extra amount once you have reached the safety net—what is the safety net now, $874.90?—and another two prescriptions and, the year after, another two and so on. This is a Clayton’s safety net because it means that people will never get to the end of this and there will never be a proper safety net under them. The idea that there is a rebalancing here between the government and the individual for those who are the poorest in our society and also for the majority of people affected here—normal, ordinary, working Australians with families—is simply ludicrous.

This is a government saying that we have got a problem with a growing number of aged people in the population and that more resources of the PBS are being demanded but seeking to fix it by putting the increase in the costs of the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme of some 30 per cent onto individuals and families. I think it is just dead wrong. You do not fix the situation this way, and I condemn the approach it has taken here. (Time expired)

Mr LAURIE FERGUSON (Reid) (6.32 pm)—The National Health Amendment (Budget Measures—Pharmaceutical Benefits Safety Net) Bill 2005, as earlier speakers have indicated, essentially undertakes two changes. The first is that the safety net 20-day rule would mean that the patient copayment amount will not accrue towards the very important safety net threshold, and the patient copayment will be the standard amount that applies to the person’s entitlement. As well as that there are changes in the thresholds for eligibility for PBS entitlements. Much reliance has been placed on the Intergenerational report of 2002-03 from the Treasurer, which spoke of a fivefold rise in costs by 2041-42. Nobody is disputing for a moment the demographic changes around the world are important, whether it is with regard to the lack of skills, matters like tourism patterns or household formation and the nature of cities. Perhaps more esoterically, I read an article yesterday about a syndrome developing in Japan among women who have to put up with their husbands retiring after 40 or 50 years and coming home and dominating the household. So no-one is denying for a moment the importance of the
changing nature of society and the costs it can have on the health system.

However, where we would have some difference is in asking ourselves whether that sustainability should be based solely upon the perceived increase in costs or whether there should be a political willingness to defend the system and to argue that this is one of the crucial aspects that makes this society historically worth while. One has to question whether the real intention of the government is to defend the system through these changes or to undermine the long-term universality of the system. At the same time we can wonder, as on many other fronts—most demonstrably in recent days in industrial relations and in terms of driving people’s working conditions down—whether it really is an inequitable policy that will ask those on lower incomes to bear a higher burden.

On the issue of costs, there is an interesting paper by the Parliamentary Library, Current issues brief 12, 2001-02. While there might have been some fiddling at the edges of the changes that have occurred in the interim, the fundamentals are still there concerning the costs of health for the different OECD countries. Among the points that that paper made were:

... that the proportion of public health expenditure Australia commits to pharmaceutical subsidy is less than the average of that spent by other comparable countries like Canada, France, NZ, Spain, Sweden, UK, and the USA.

Similarly, the paper stated:

The proportion of overall pharmaceutical spending that Australia publicly funds is the lowest compared to other similar nations having universal pharmaceutical cover.

The paper gave instances drawing on basically the same group of countries. It also noted:

In 1998, Australia’s public expenditure on pharmaceuticals was 0.5 per cent of GDP, less than the average (0.7 per cent) for other OECD countries for which there is data for that year.

And so it went on. If this country is going to be hit by an ageing population then, as everyone who is following these issues knows, Japan and Germany will be hit far sooner and far more severely. So it is a question of whether we should use the Intergenerational report simply to defend changes that are going to hit people very hard. All the figures show that concession card holders form the overwhelming majority of people in the PBS system.

Another issue which speakers have raised and which I would join them in raising concerns the question of integrity in taking the Australian people into confidence. This was not really on the agenda at the last election, and we had people in question time today defending inappropriate conduct concerning government grants on the basis of the election results. At the last election we did not see too much vocal effort on these matters, despite the fact that the government is now justifying things with an Intergenerational report that was written some years before the last federal election. A government which has already saved $1.3 billion or $1.4 billion with other changes in the last few years is now seeking a $200 million change. As indicated by many people, $874.90 is not a small figure to many people who face these kinds of changes.

I noticed, in listening to this debate, that my friend the member for McMillan was waxing lyrical with respect to Medicare Gold. I should note that he spoke of it as a dog of a policy and drew an analogy with dropping a dead cat on the table. He also talked about scare campaigns, as did the person opposite—the member for Sturt. Unfortunately, there was an interesting article in the Weekend Australian on the weekend. It had a very interesting headline: ‘Secret Howard health plan matched Labor’s’. That
article by David Uren referred to revelations by former Public Service Commissioner Andrew Podger that he had been commissioned to look at this concept and come up with an alternative. That was very interesting and, as indicated by Labor’s shadow spokesman, it is a complete repudiation of Mr Tony Abbott’s attack on it and an endorsement of Labor’s current position. It is a pity that the member for McMillan was not taken into the confidence of the Prime Minister with regard to what was actually happening in this portfolio area, just as the Australian people were not taken into his confidence with regard to his intentions before the last election.

As I said, the major changes in the system are going to hit those people on lower incomes in a harder fashion. The other issue is the 20-day limit. No-one doubts that there can be issues with people who are getting close to the threshold going in and getting an extra script. But, quite frankly, the average person who requires in the area of 52 scripts will not exactly be in robust health. And, equally, there will be a minority of people who perhaps will get their scripts and deal in them or send them overseas, but in the broad most people are not in that category. There are people who have children whom they think will need a further script in the very near future and there are people who live in rural, regional or remote Australia and obviously it is more sensible that they get the scripts on their visits to town. Those people will be hit by this. As I said, we will see significant changes over the next few years which will make it extremely difficult for the lower end of Australia’s electorate to survive, particularly in the context of talk about increased inflation as a result of increased petrol prices flowing through to other products.

Of course the government have relied upon increases in the cost of the system over the last few years. They were not quite so vocal about the history of some of those increases because one of the most massive increases in the system—which they now bemoan and which they are now so worried about—was related to their own changes, some years ago, with regard to the accessibility to the senior health card for self-funded retirees. That meant that people on $50,000 incomes and couples on $80,000 had the benefit of bulk-billing and other benefits of the system. There were also changes in relation to Celebrex. Those changes had a big impact, particularly over one year. It is also interesting to note that, whilst these changes have been justified by supposed experts on the growth in costs, the more up-to-date realities of cost expansion were a feature of recent negotiations with the Pharmacy Guild. That was part of the reason that the Pharmacy Guild dug its toes in with regard to some matters.

Yesterday, in an article in the *Australian Financial Review*, the Citigroup health care analyst, Andrew Goodsall—whilst being very supportive of the government—said that the initial growth projections had been sadly incorrect. The article said:

The initial $11.75 billion deal implied expected PBS growth of between 6 to 7 per cent a year, according to a Citigroup report released last week.

The article went on:

But government spending on the PBS in the year to September was only 4.6 per cent higher than the previous corresponding period ...

So we have very serious changes coming into the health system on the basis of cost movements which do not seem to be occurring. As we are all well aware, there has also been a significant drop in the number of scripts, and those scripts are heavily concentrated among the people who are most needy. There are many reasons why the system has expanded: increasing availability of newer, more effective, costly drugs; promotional efforts by the pharmaceutical companies—it
has been estimated that one third of their sales revenue goes towards marketing—and inappropriate approaches to the medical fraternity to take up particular pharmaceuticals.

There is the question of whether, when we do these kinds of things, we are actually accomplishing anything in terms of the long-term cost of the system. If people do not use some of these medicines and if the government does accomplish some downturn as regards people who absolutely do need medication, there may be more cost to the system when these people are hospitalised. There is also a need for coherent, easily understood information for the average person with regards to medication. There are many reasons why the cost of the system could expand. The government has chosen to put all of its eggs in the wagon—

Mr Pyne—In the basket.

Mr Laurie Ferguson—The analogy is wrong. I am pleased the member for Sturt is so keen on this. The government has chosen to put all of its eggs in that basket and, unfortunately, whilst the member opposite might think it is highly amusing, people on low incomes in this country will face a far worse situation in the next few years as these two measures have an impact.

Ms Hall (Shortland) (6.44 pm)—It really worries me when we have legislation on health before us on this side of the House and before the parliament as a whole, because if there is one area of government where the Howard government has really underperformed, let the Australian people down and managed to change the face of any particular system it is in the area of health. The action of the Howard government in relation to health has been reprehensible. I do not think that there is any person in Australia—except maybe a few of the supporters of the government—who would give the Howard government a tick for its health policy. We have recently discussed the Medicare safety net, where the Minister for Health and Ageing gave a rock solid ironclad guarantee that the safety net would not increase, and we have seen just how rock solid and ironclad that guarantee is, because less than 12 months later we are back here in this parliament debating legislation that is going to increase the safety net threshold.

Here in Australia we had—and I say had—and to some extent still have, a world-class health system. Previously it was a model for the rest of the world. Prior to the Howard government getting its tentacles into the health system here in Australia, I think we had the best health system in the world. People came from the US to look at the Australian Medicare system and at using it as a model. We were a role model for the rest of the world, and they were looking at Medicare as a model for a system that they could introduce in the US. The PBS has been noted worldwide as being the best system that exists. Unfortunately, little by little the Howard government has eroded our health system. Little by little it has whittled down Medicare. Little by little it has eroded our Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme, and this piece of legislation we are considering today, the National Health Amendment (Budget Measures—Pharmaceutical Benefits Safety Net) Bill 2005, is just another example of that.

This legislation will implement new safety net and patient copayment arrangements for pharmaceutical benefits where pharmaceutical benefits are supplied within 20 days of the previous supply. The amendments will also increase the threshold of eligibility for the pharmaceutical safety net entitlements, and I will be going into this in a little bit more detail during the contribution that I make to the House. These changes to the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme—PBS—safety net and copayments were not policies taken to the electorate at the last election,
just as the change to the Medicare safety net was not a policy taken to the Australian people at the last election. Unfortunately for the Australian people, this government says one thing before the election and then another thing after it.

The rate of growth of the PBS has already slowed down substantially as a result of previous increases in patient copayments and the 12.5 per cent cut in the prices of generic medicines. The initiatives outlined in this piece of legislation will hit the poorest and the sickest Australians. To be quite honest with you, I believe that the Howard government has abdicated its responsibility to this group in our society and, if I dare say it, is showing its lack of compassion and care for those poorest and sickest Australians. The 20-day restriction does not contain sufficient exemptions to cover the situation that arises regularly to require people to get prescriptions refilled inside the time frame. I think that this legislation is quite flawed, and we on this side of the House will be opposing it.

Under the Howard government, the responsibility for the purchase of health care and health services is slowly but surely being moved from the federal government to the individual. In other words, all Australians are being asked to pay more for their health care, be they a patient, be they a person on income support or be they a person who has a family and is struggling to meet their health care costs. Under this government, the cost of health care has escalated, be it the cost of seeing a doctor or the cost of buying medication. The one thing that is certain is that it is Australians who are paying more and more for their health care.

This increasing cost that Australians are paying for their health care has not been accompanied by a decline in the percentage of GDP that the federal government is spending on health. I would argue very strongly that it is the philosophy of the Howard government that is driving the increase in the cost to the individual and its philosophy that is also driving the increase in the percentage of GDP. Rather than looking at and analysing the best way to restrain health costs whilst at the same time ensuring that each and every Australian—no matter what their income, no matter what their health status—has access to quality health care, the government has developed an elitist approach to health care.

They are slowly but surely pushing Australia down the track of a two-tiered health system. They are slowly but surely moving towards a US style system where hundreds of thousands of Australians will not be insured and will not be able to pay for health care, and that is what I consider reprehensible. We have seen the government’s changes in Medicare, changes that have shifted the cost of going to see a doctor from Medicare to that person, rather than the government being prepared to ensure that doctors bulk-bill. Rather, they are ensuring that all Australians, as patients, contribute a very significant amount to their own health care. With pharmaceuticals there has already been the 30 per cent increase, and now we are seeing the increases that I am going to be discussing in a little bit more detail in a moment.

Every day, under this government, we move closer to the US system. Every day people in Australia are paying more for health. Like other members on this side of the House, I am constantly receiving complaints from people within my electorate about the Howard government’s failure to meet their needs when it comes to health care, whether it be as a result of increasing the cost of health insurance—despite the government’s 30 per cent rebate—the failure of doctors to bulk-bill, the increase in the Medicare safety net or the increasing cost of pharmaceuticals. Increasing the cost of
pharmaceuticals and health care is bad health policy, and I will talk a little more about that.

The government’s approach to the increased cost of health care is to blame the ageing population. ‘If we weren’t getting older,’ the government says, ‘then we wouldn’t have these increased pressures on our health system.’ I believe that there are other ways that we can approach this matter and I also believe that, if the government does not have the right strategies in place, the cost will be even greater. If we have a system where people do not take medication that is prescribed for them and they do not attend the doctor when they are sick because they cannot afford to, then in the long run the health costs to the country will greatly increase.

There is absolutely no way that you can look at the government’s approach to health care without coming to the conclusion that it is a mean-spirited government. It is not interested in the overall good for Australians and it is not interested in providing good quality health-care to Australians; rather, it is interested in cost cutting, penny-pinching and ensuring that, if you have plenty of money, you can get the best health care available but, if you are struggling, you should have access to a second-class health system.

I would like to examine the legislation in a little more detail. The legislation will implement new safety net and copayment arrangements for some pharmaceutical benefits where the pharmaceutical benefit is supplied within 20 days of a previous supply. In other words, if a person has a further prescription filled within 20 days that will also increase the threshold for PBS safety net entitlements. The safety net 20-day rule will result in the following effects for such early supply: the patient copayment amount will not accrue towards the safety net threshold and the patient copayment will be the standard amount that applies to the person’s entitlement. A reduction to the safety net copayment will not apply.

This shows a lack of understanding by the government. There are not sufficient exemptions in place to cover certain situations—for example, people could be travelling. As the member for Reid pointed out, if people are very sick they will invariably get a script earlier if they are in the vicinity of a pharmacist. This will punish those people who are the sickest. This bill also increases the threshold—and that is set out in part 7, division IVA of the act—for the eligibility for pharmaceutical benefits safety net entitlements for general and concessional patients.

The legislation will increase the general threshold by an amount equal to the indexed general patient copayment amounts on 1 January each year from 2006 to 2009 inclusive. I wonder what will happen after 2009. Maybe the increase will be even greater. If we look at the record of this government, we see that what this government does—and does very well—is continue to increase the costs for people in the Australian community. The legislation also seeks to increase the concessional threshold by an amount equal to the patient copayment amounts on 1 January. These increases will occur—and this is a very important point—in addition to the annual indexation of the safety net threshold on 1 January each year, resulting in a gradual adjustment of the eligibility threshold for the pharmaceutical benefits safety net entitlement by increments over four years.

The Howard government has made the sustainability of the PBS a major issue, but it has failed to do the hard work. It has failed to address the real issues. What we are getting is more of the same. Instead, patients are paying more out-of-pocket expenses for their essential medicines and, along with that,
more out-of-pocket expenses to visit their GP. They are faced with more out-of-pocket expenses in every area of health. The cost of medicines, largely as a result of the 21 per cent increase to the PBS copayment introduced in January, and increases in the threshold of the PBS safety net, will add to the burden of the sickest Australians. In other words, the people whom this legislation will hit the hardest are the sickest in our community.

This legislation will actually enshrine in law part of the budget—that is, the promise that the Treasurer delivered to older people in our country. Pensioners contacted my office after the budget was brought down and asked me what the budget had in it for them. My answer was that they would have to pay for two more prescriptions each year, because that is all it delivered. This legislation will deliver that to the Australian people. The legislation will implement the safety net and copayment arrangements that I have outlined above and increase the threshold for eligibility for the PBS.

What really concerns me is the fact that this 20-day rule will result in increased costs to the people of Australia and the fact that it will not accrue towards the safety net threshold. We all know how important it is for very sick Australians to reach that safety net threshold. Many people come into my office and tell me just how they struggle to pay for their medication, including a number of elderly people who are quite ill and have 19 or 20 medications, tablets, that they take on a daily basis. These people are going to have to pay for two more prescriptions a year, a 30 per cent increase in their copayment. Whilst that may not sound like very much to people on the other side of the House, for these people it creates real financial hardship.

I would argue very strongly that this is going to hurt a number of people. This legislation that impacts on the 20-day rule and increases the number of prescriptions that people need to get before they reach the safety net is just another mean-spirited trick by the Howard government. It is just another example of an arrogant government that is totally out of touch with the people of Australia. If members on the other side of this House would take the time to go out and talk to people in their electorates—meet with real people, hear their real concerns and understand just how difficult it is for them to pay for this vital medication—then they would rethink some of the legislation, particularly some of the health legislation, that they bring into this House. This is just another cost burden on those Australians who can least afford it. It is just another sleight of hand by the Howard government. It is just another example of arrogance.

New data shows that increased copayments introduced in January and the cuts in the price of drugs with generic alternatives have had a major impact on the growth of the PBS. The cost of the PBS grew by 4.84 per cent compared with 11 per cent in the previous year, with a drop in prescription growth to just 1.36 per cent. This says to me that those people who need medication—those sick and elderly Australians and those families with children who are struggling to make ends meet, struggling with higher petrol prices, struggling with their day-to-day existence—are not having prescriptions filled and are not getting that vital medication that they need to ensure that they have good health. I see this as a very short-sighted approach to health. I think that pharmaceuticals actually cut the cost of health in a number of areas. The introduction of pharmaceuticals and new generation pharmaceuticals has actually benefited our health system and kept the cost of health down.

This legislation is just more of the same—more of the Howard government pushing
through legislation that they did not tell the Australian people about before the election. It is about increasing health costs, about making Australians pay more out-of-pocket expenses when it comes to health, about total disregard for the Australian people, about trying to undermine the PBS and about undermining our health system. It really demonstrates why the people of Australia turn to Labor. They know, when it comes to health, that every survey that is taken shows that Labor understands the health needs of Australian people much better than the government—and the government stand condemned for introducing this legislation. (Time expired)

Ms BIRD (Cunningham) (7.04 pm)—Usually when I rise to speak on a bill I take the opportunity to look at the contributions of those that have spoken before me in order to engage in some level of debate about the various arguments put forward in support of government legislation, given that one would assume that debate was the purpose of this process. Having done that on this bill, the National Health Amendment (Budget Measures—Pharmaceutical Benefits Safety Net) Bill 2005, I discovered that, other than the pearls of wisdom dropped by the parliamentary secretary at the table and one other speaker on behalf of the government, no-one else on the government side had actually taken the opportunity—or perhaps I should say taken their bravery in hand—to come into this House to speak in support of this particular piece of legislation.

Why is it that I take the opportunity to speak on a bill dealing with pharmaceutical benefits? It is because I think that it is one of the systems in place in our health system more broadly that provides for not only acute care issues but also the longer term preventative health measures that enable us to stay as a healthy population and indeed to lengthen the lifespans of Australian people. This struck me most pointedly a few years ago when I was watching a movie called As Good As It Gets, starring Jack Nicholson and Helen Hunt. There was a scene where Helen Hunt’s son, who had a chronic illness, was home from school because he was very ill. She was expressing great concern about the range of medicines that he needed. I was watching it with my sons and my eldest son, who was about 16 at the time, looked at me quite bewildered and said, ‘Why doesn’t she just go and get the medicines?’

We had a bit of a conversation and it occurred to me that he had no concept that, in other places in the world, there was not easy, affordable access to medicines and that people regularly made decisions about health treatments that relied on their income rather than their medical need. He was quite shocked when I talked about what the American system was and how, if you did not have private health coverage, not only did you have to pay for medicines but in fact medicines were far more expensive than in Australia. It is one of those schemes that has been in place for a good amount of time, and people in the community have a bit of an assumption that it is a fundamental part of our health system. The government has been gradually undermining the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme by creating, in effect, a two-tiered system. It really does reflect the same pattern that has been applied to the Medicare system more broadly.

As indicated by previous speakers, the National Health Amendment (Budget Measures—Pharmaceutical Benefits Safety Net) Bill 2005 is intended to implement a measure proposed in the budget this year with regard to changes to the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme safety net and the patient copayment arrangements when patients seek to fill scripts within a 20-day period. The important thing to know about this bill is that its purpose is not to implement an election com-
mitment of the government. As we know, many things were proposed in the budget and argued in this House because they represented the government fulfilling promises that it had been campaigning on and making commitments to the general population about. Far from it with this bill. In fact, neither measure in this bill was even mentioned in the election campaign.

We should recognise that the government did make a significant announcement about the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme during the election, which was the 12½ per cent reduction in PBS drugs when a generic version arrived on the market. However, on this issue not a word was said. Indeed, I have no doubt that if the government had talked about its intentions with the PBS, particularly regarding the safety net and copayments, there would have been a great deal of interest in what was being proposed in electorates like mine, where particularly active pensioner groups look at the alternative policies of the parties during the election period. Did we get a debate or a discussion on that? We certainly did not. In fact, what we got were constant commitments from the minister that across the board these safety nets were about making sure that, once they reached a certain level of expenditure, those with chronic health conditions would be protected from further cost. The case was strongly put by the government that the safety net was about ensuring those people did not suffer too great a burden as the system moved towards a more user pays type of approach.

Given that it was not an election commitment and that the government was not even willing to discuss it, perhaps we can understand why so few government speakers are willing to come into the House and put their arguments here or, indeed, to their electorates about why they feel the measures in this bill are necessary. We all put out regular newsletters in our electorates outlining things that the government has done and how we feel about them, and I would be well interested to see how many government members actually outlined this particular initiative in their newsletters. I seriously doubt it has seen the light of day in any of them. With great pleasure I anticipate any of them being honest enough to outline these changes in the letters that each of us regularly delivers to the households of electors.

Labor’s shadow minister has proposed an amendment to the bill because we do not accept that the answer to every problem with the PBS should be addressed by increasing the cost to the individual, particularly when the individuals we are talking about suffer from chronic illnesses. Given that this is a budget measure, one could presume that it was perhaps forced through due to a pressing problem with the bottom line of the budget. One might expect to hear members of the government in here arguing that, yes, it is very sad and we are very reluctant to put it through, but the budget is in so much trouble that we have to take these measures. It is no surprise that that is not the case at all. I understand the predicted budget surplus is about $13 billion. The budget’s PBS savings measures amount to $1.3 billion over four years, so this bill will hardly have a dramatic effect on the budget position and one assumes that it is not the driving force behind the change.

In opposing the bill, the Labor shadow minister for health has moved a five-part amendment to the bill that I would like to speak to. The amendment states:

Whilst not declining to give the bill a second reading, the House condemns the Government for:

and it lists five issues of concern to us. The first is:
Failing to invest in the long term sustainability of the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme.
We have heard other speakers talk about how the Treasurer’s *Intergenerational report*, which was released with the 2002-03 budget, stated that there is a huge threat to the cost of health in this nation due to our ageing population. The *Intergenerational report* outlined the parameters of this in great detail and caused a great deal of debate in the community about how our society would sustain an ageing population—much to the chagrin, I have to say, of many of the baby boomers, who felt particularly targeted as contributing to that ageing population.

What the *Intergenerational report* did not do was identify how you can make that ageing population sustainable for Australia. If we invest in measures such as health or financial savings now, the assumption is that the costs that we carry as a society in dealing with the current aged population will simply be recreated by upcoming generations as they move into that age bracket. That does not have to be the case. If governments invest in good health systems, a healthy ageing population can be sustained. So the presumption that in an ageing population we will automatically see a repeat of the types of costs that we have with the elderly now is wrong. Indeed, because it is a wrong assumption, it creates a real problem in dealing with things such as the PBS.

The PBS, in many ways, determines how pharmaceuticals are used in our community and can be an investment in the health of an ageing population. Many of the scripts that people fill on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme are about treating conditions that would see them become chronically ill under other circumstances. Many new generation drugs are about sustaining healthier people later into life; but, rather than seeing them as an investment in ensuring that, when the population ages, it does so in a much healthier state and lives for a much longer time, we are making it less possible for people to access those pharmaceuticals, and therefore, in the long term, they will potentially have far more severe and chronic illnesses when they are older.

The shadow minister for health has already outlined many initiatives that could assist in the long-term viability of the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme. These initiatives include the health outcomes data initiative, which brings together and better links the data that is available on health outcomes. We can use that data to evaluate and make far more effective the use of the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme. That, in itself, is an efficiency improvement and can ensure that the scheme remains sustainable for a longer time. Particularly when we are dealing with people with chronic illnesses, that sort of analysis and data can be invaluable in making sure that what we expend on treatment is expended in an efficient way.

Another proposal was for the National Prescribing Service, which does invaluable work in giving unbiased information and educational material, which assists doctors, in particular, but also consumers in making informed decisions about the medicines they are using. Indeed, the work of the National Prescribing Service has been shown to be cost-effective and has delivered savings to the PBS scheme. Clearly, a greater investment by the government in those sorts of data research processes can improve the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme.

Another link in the way in which people use medicines is the general practitioner. There are few things that can be done there. Indeed, the divisions of GPs have been doing a few programs and projects that have improved the use of pharmaceuticals, particularly in the areas of case management of
chronic illness and management of the way that elderly people use pharmaceuticals. Those sorts of programs could be expanded. Then there is the issue of pharmaceutical promotions. We are all aware that GPs get enormous pressure around the introduction of new medicines and the potential for over-prescribing. Putting effort into—and perhaps control of—the way the industry promotes its medications could be another worthwhile avenue to look at. Whilst there is self-regulation at the moment—we respect the professionalism of doctors—there is no doubt that the pharmaceutical industry is particularly aggressive in promoting its product. Perhaps it is time we looked at an increased level of control—or at least upping the level of self-regulation—and the way in which doctors access information would be a potential opportunity to look at.

Another point the shadow health minister has made in other discussions about ways that we can improve the sustainability of the PBS relate, in particular, to the way we deal with two types of medicines. I have already talked about the medicines that are targeted at the broad population; they are often health improvement type medications and, properly prescribed, they can be a good investment in ensuring that people remain healthy for long periods of time and do not become a burden on the acute end of the system. There are also the high-cost medicines that are targeted at very small populations, and developing a streamlined system for those drugs would, I think, be particularly helpful.

I am currently working with a group of women from Stanwell Park in my electorate on behalf of a lady who has a form of breast cancer which requires treatment with the drug Herceptin which, she has been told, is going to cost about $60,000. She is a 48-year-old mother of five children and simply does not have that sort of money or the capacity to access that sort of money. I have written to the Minister for Health and Ageing on her behalf and I am hopeful that, given how many such cases there are, the government will quickly give a positive outcome to the review of Herceptin. In the meantime, not wanting to leave them worried and with no other avenue to explore, we have organised some fundraising with local community groups, including the local Rotary ladies. There will always be the odd occasion where very new drugs at a very high cost may require this sort of activity in the community, but I would hate to see this become a standard method of funding treatment for people in our community when they need these sorts of drugs. There is also a range of better economic tools that the shadow health minister has outlined, taking into account a much more effective estimate of the growth of the PBS and how we might address potential problems in future.

The second amendment that Labor proposes is a criticism of the government for failing to tell the Australian public at the last election that additional changes to the PBS safety net and patient copayment were planned in addition to the 21 per cent increase in the copayment and the safety net introduced last January. To some extent, I have discussed the fact that the government did not make this clear—in fact, the government seemed to avoid it altogether.

The amendment also refers to the government continuing to implement changes to the PBS, despite the fact that PBS growth rates have already slowed substantially and despite the fact that these changes will hit the poorest and sickest Australians. I, like many members in this House, received a document from the Pharmacy Guild of Australia which outlined some of their concerns—in particular, the 20-day rule. They highlight two examples where access to medicine for people in nursing homes and in rural and remote areas often means that they get more than a
one-month supply. They give a number of case studies on the impact of this legislation. One that rang true with me involved a kid on Ventolin for asthma. I have a son who used Ventolin for his asthma, and I could not tell you the number he lost. The fact that children have to it with them all the time does not necessarily mean that they will remember where they have put it. In fact, at one stage my son managed to lose a dental appliance that was in his mouth. So the ability of children, when dealing with these sorts of illnesses, to lose things is well known to many people in this House. The sort of change proposed in the bill does not allow for those issues to be properly addressed.

The fourth point in our amendment refers to the government’s failure to ensure that the 20-day restriction rule contains sufficient exemptions to cover situations that will arise regularly, requiring people to get their prescriptions filled inside that time frame. Those examples have been outlined by other speakers. The final amendment refers to the providing of further opportunities for the Minister for Health and Ageing to intervene to limit the availability of medicines on the PBS. This has caused me a significant degree of concern. While the minister acts on the advice of PBAC, what criteria the advisory committee will be using to make that decision are not outlined anywhere. (Time expired)

Mr PYNE (Sturt—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Health and Ageing) (7.24 pm)—It gives me pleasure to sum up the National Health Amendment (Budget Measures—Pharmaceutical Benefits Safety Net) Bill 2005 on behalf of the Minister for Health and Ageing, the member for Warringah. I would like to thank the members of the House who have taken part in the debate, particularly the member for Cunningham, who struggled through her speech. We thought she might not quite make it to the end. Fortunately, she did make it to the end and I thank her for her contribution. I would also like to thank the members for Blaxland, Reid, Shortland, Lalor, Banks, Scullin and Werriwa for their contributions from the opposition side and particularly the member for McMillan for his contribution from the government’s side. Even though he was the only government speaker, he made up for the accepted wisdom on the other side. In fact, if only one of those speeches were given it should have been the member for McMillan’s because that was easily the most well-informed and erudite speech on the bill in the House.

The National Health Amendment (Budget Measures—Pharmaceutical Benefits Safety Net) Bill 2005 amends the National Health Act 1953 to implement measures announced in the 2005-06 budget regarding the threshold amounts for the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme safety net and the operation of safety net arrangements for early supply of some PBS medicines. The amendments increased the PBS safety net thresholds for general patients and concessional beneficiaries by amounts equal to two patient copayments on 1 January each year from 2006 to 2009.

These increases will be in addition to the usual annual indexation. They also introduce new safety net arrangements for some PBS medicines if a repeat supply of the same medicine occurs within 20 days of a previous supply. Such supplies will still be able to be supplied where that is necessary under the immediate supply arrangements but they will fall outside safety net entitlements. These measures support responsible and affordable access to the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme, which has been growing 12 per cent every year for the last 10 years. The changes recognise the important role that the PBS safety net plays in protecting people who need a large number of medicines with high out-of-pocket costs and also those people
who are on low incomes. The changes also demonstrate the government’s commitment to having safety net arrangements that ensure the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme remains viable into the future. These amendments reflect sound management of the PBS and fair affordable access to subsidised medicines. I commend the bill to the House.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER—The original question was that this bill be now read a second time. To this the honourable member for Lalor has moved as an amendment that all words after ‘that’ be omitted with a view to substituting other words. The immediate question is that the words proposed to be omitted stand part of the question. There being more than one voice calling for a division, in accordance with standing order 133 the division is deferred until after 8 pm.

Debate adjourned.

COMMONWEALTH RADIOACTIVE WASTE MANAGEMENT BILL 2005
Cognate bill:
COMMONWEALTH RADIOACTIVE WASTE MANAGEMENT (RELATED AMENDMENT) BILL 2005
Second Reading
Debate resumed from 13 October, on motion by Dr Nelson:
That this bill be now read a second time.

Ms MACKLIN (Jagajaga) (7.28 pm)—Labor will oppose the Commonwealth Radioactive Waste Management Bill 2005 and the Commonwealth Radioactive Waste Management (Related Amendment) Bill 2005. They are extreme, arrogant and heavy-handed bills. Labor will defend the right of the community, including Indigenous communities, to be consulted about radioactive waste to be dumped in their backyards. Labor will argue that these bills are not only unnecessary but also make local communities voiceless in the government campaign to impose a waste dump on the Northern Territory. I move:

That all words after “That” be omitted with a view to substituting the following words: “whilst not declining to give the bill a second reading, the House condemns the Government for:
(1) its extreme, arrogant and unnecessary approach to the nuclear waste dump;
(2) misleading Australians about the necessity of the bill despite believing that the Government already has the power under existing laws to site and establish a waste dump;
(3) breaking its promise not to locate a waste dump in the Northern Territory;
(4) overriding many federal legal protections including the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Act 1984, the Native Title Act 1993, and the Lands Acquisition Act 1989;
(5) destroying existing or possible rights of indigenous people to the proposed waste dump sites in the Northern Territory;
(6) trampling over Northern Territorians and other communities by overriding any existing or future State or Territory law or regulation that prohibits, or interferes with the selection of Commonwealth land as a site, the establishment of a waste dump, and the transportation of waste across the highways and by-ways of Australia;
(7) refusing to hear the concerns of Northern Territorians and imposing nuclear waste on local communities without consultation or building trust and inclusiveness;
(8) misleading Australians by falsely claiming that unless the waste dump site is selected urgently, medical isotope production will cease;
(9) destroying any recourse to procedural fairness provisions for anyone wishing to challenge the Minister’s decision to put a waste dump in the Northern Territory; and
(10) disregarding the International Atomic Energy Commission’s recommendations on good social practices like consultation and transparency in relation to nuclear waste”.

CHAMBER
These bills will have three major impacts. First, they allow the government to impose a waste dump on one of three sites in the Northern Territory. Second, they give the government total power to site, construct and operate the Commonwealth radioactive waste dump at one of the three sites in the Northern Territory. They do this by: overriding any existing or future state or territory law or regulation that prohibits or interferes with the selection of Commonwealth land as a site, the establishment of a waste dump and the transportation of waste across the highways and byways of Australia; overriding many federal legal protections, including the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Act 1984, the Native Title Act 1993 and the Lands Acquisition Act 1989; notwithstanding any state or territory legislation, giving the Howard government the authority to do anything necessary for, or incidental to, establishing or operating a Commonwealth waste dump at the chosen site and transporting radioactive waste to it; and, finally, acquiring or extinguishing all interests in the chosen site.

The third impact is that these bills destroy any recourse to procedural fairness provisions for anyone wishing to challenge the minister’s decision to put a waste dump in the Northern Territory. The Commonwealth Radioactive Waste Management (Related Amendment) Bill 2005 puts the nail in the coffin of accountability by making the Administrative Decisions (Judicial Review) Act 1977 inapplicable to the Commonwealth Radioactive Waste Management Bill 2005 once it becomes law. This last extraordinary step means that no-one will be able to hold the government to account for its actions in selecting a site for the waste dump. What if the Howard government trips up yet again—maybe they drill the holes in the wrong place, trash sacred Aboriginal sites, ruin careers? Under these bills, there is absolutely no recourse available to ordinary Australians. No access to the courts is possible.

I suspect we can all recall more than one or two things this government has bungled and ruined in its nine long incompetent years—the Gallipoli road works spring to mind immediately. The fact that no-one will be able to hold the government to account on the waste dump site is nothing short of appalling, particularly when you look at the extraordinary process that has been followed to date by this government.

Let us start with the deliberately misleading statements we have seen served up so far on the location of the nuclear waste dump. On 14 July 2004, the Prime Minister announced that the government would pursue sites on Commonwealth land, both offshore and onshore, for the establishment of a dump for Commonwealth waste alone. Then on 30 September 2004, just prior to the last federal election, the Minister for the Environment and Heritage ruled out the Northern Territory for a dump site:

The Commonwealth is not pursuing any options anywhere on the mainland, so we can be quite categorical about that, because the Northern Territory is on the mainland.

Next we had the Minister for Education, Science and Training supporting this claim on 24 January 2005 when he stated that the Commonwealth would prioritise an offshore site for the waste dump:

So the Australian government will be looking at an offshore facility, that is our clear preference. We are determined that it will be an offshore facility but we are also concurrently looking at a ‘remote’ area, a long way away facility, to store intermediate and low level waste should the offshore site not be available.

The member for Solomon was happy to rule out the Northern Territory as a host for the
Commonwealth waste dump as late as 7 June 2005. He said:

There’s not going to be a national nuclear waste dump in the Northern Territory ... That was the commitment undertaken in the lead up to the federal election and I haven’t heard anything apart from that view expressed since that election.

The member for Solomon needs to get his ears cleaned out because only a month later, on 15 July 2005, we had the Minister for Education, Science and Training kicking Territorians right in the Red Centre—we have the member for Lingiari just joining us at the table now; these sites are in his electorate—by announcing the government’s intention to locate a waste dump in the Northern Territory.

When this government needed to get re-elected, members of the government were lining up to reassure Territorians they would not dream of putting a dump in the Northern Territory. But they could not break that commitment fast enough once they were safely back in office. We have a very compliant Liberal Party member, the member for Solomon, as well as Senator Scullion from the Northern Territory. They certainly should not be feeling safe at all after these broken commitments, because I know, and certainly the member for Lingiari knows, that Territorians will not forget these betrayals any time soon.

The chain of untruths that we have been told by this government trying to sell this waste dump does not stop there. This government, we all know—and now, of course, the whole Australian community knows—is prepared to spend millions of dollars to tell Australians that lower pay and greater job insecurity is good for them; we know that they think trashing honesty will get them what they want. Let us just go through all of these claims that we know to be untrue.

First of all, the Minister for Education, Science and Training told the parliament on 13 October 2005 that we absolutely need these two bills:

Recent statements from the Northern Territory government that it will attempt to obstruct and delay the project reinforce the need for this bill to ensure the Commonwealth can act with certainty and without undue interference.

Perhaps the minister should speak to his own department, because they inform us that they believe they already have the power under section 109 of the Constitution and the Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Act 1998 to transport waste across Australia and override objections by the states and territories to set up a waste dump. The department view these bills as a way to avoid delays or litigation altogether, even though they expect litigation to fail under the current laws and constitutional provisions. To my mind, that is code for ‘the government just wants to cut out any consultation with the community over this waste dump’, which we should not be surprised about.

Claim No. 2 by the government is:

A decision on the final site for the waste management facility must be made by April and a Territory Government legal challenge would take us well beyond that time.

This piece of nonsense was peddled by the member for Solomon and Senator Nigel Scullion on 30 October 2005. The government are using a kind of emotional blackmail to push this dump legislation through: ‘Oppose it,’ they say, ‘and you’re risking lives.’ These are very cheap tricks indeed. There is absolutely no truth to an April 2006 deadline. The government’s own official time line makes no reference to April 2006 deadline. The government’s own official time line makes no reference to April 2006. What is more, their time line shows that a final government decision on this site is not due to be made until late 2007. So the government themselves know that the minister who has to make the final decision, the Minister for
the Environment and Heritage, will not be making that decision until late 2007, a year and a half later than April 2006.

The Department of Education, Science and Training inform me that April 2006 is the date they expect the Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency, known as ARPANSA, to make a decision on an operating licence for the new reactor, known as OPAL, at Lucas Heights. So they are trying to put the responsibility for this April date onto ARPANSA. Members of the government have taken the great leap from this that they must select a site for a waste facility in order for ARPANSA to issue an operating licence for the new OPAL reactor by April 2006. Our briefing by ARPANSA indicates that this was news to ARPANSA. It seems that April has been imposed as a so-called deadline by everyone except the licensing body. The licensing body have said, rightly, that they would make a decision on an operating licence for the replacement reactor, OPAL, when and if they are satisfied and ready. Rightly, they will do what is right to make sure that all the considerations that they have legal responsibility for are properly met, and they have not set a false date of April. It is true that ARPANSA want to tie down the details of waste handling, storage and disposal in relation to the new OPAL reactor. It is crystal clear that ARPANSA have set no arbitrary deadline of April 2006 on the licensing process. It seems that it is only desperate coalition members who are trying to hide their duplicity from their constituents by raising this furphy.

The third claim by the government is:
If a decision—
on the dump site—
is not made within a matter of months, Australia will no longer be allowed to produce radioactive isotopes used in hospitals throughout the country.

This is another misleading statement by the government’s Laurel and Hardy team up in the Northern Territory—the member for Solomon and Senator Scullion. The idea that Australia will no longer be allowed to produce medical isotopes if a decision is not made by April is a very cheap political trick. We are being asked to believe that, firstly, without these bills the government cannot decide on a site; secondly, if a decision on the waste dump is not made by April, the replacement reactor will not receive an operating licence; and, thirdly, if the reactor does not have an operating licence, medical isotopes will stop being manufactured in Australia.

Let us go through each of these assertions. Firstly, as I have indicated, the Department of Education, Science and Training have acknowledged that the government has the power to select a site for the waste dump without these bills. Secondly, we know that the so-called April deadline is false: ARPANSA will make their decision when they consider it to be safe and ready to do so. Thirdly, isotope production will not stop if OPAL does not get a licence by April next year. We have an operating reactor producing isotopes—that is, the current reactor at Lucas Heights. The government is hoping to shut down the current reactor permanently by the end of 2006, but there is no critical scientific or licensing need for this, especially if there is some delay in OPAL getting a licence from ARPANSA. And remember that ARPANSA have not set an April deadline for the licence.

As the Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation, the body that runs the Lucas Heights reactor, is at pains to state in its 2004-05 annual report: We will continue to keep HIFAR—that is the name of the current reactor—operating safely and with good reliability until its final shutdown after the new OPAL reactor is
fully commissioned. After that, HIFAR will be decommissioned.

So, to be crystal clear, this annual report released just last week makes no mention that I can find of any fixed date for a compulsory decommissioning of HIFAR—no safety reason, no scientific reason and no operating reason, just more Howard government political reasons to con Territorians. The Department of Education, Science and Training have said that HIFAR’s fuel stocks are expected to run out by the end of 2006. But they have also informed us that they have located a source of fuel overseas should additional fuel be necessary. The Department of Education, Science and Training would also have us believe that the licence for HIFAR expires in 2006. This is apparently why they are doing everything they can to ensure that OPAL gets an operating licence within this manufactured time frame. Perhaps the government ought to check with the licensing body, which is adamant that its licences do not have an expiry date.

ANSTO would need to go back to ARPANSA for a licence review if they plan to operate HIFAR well beyond 2006. But the regulator is clear that HIFAR could continue to operate for some shorter time beyond 2006 if that were necessary. There is no sense in which the licence to operate HIFAR expires at the end of 2006. What the minister has also neglected to mention is that HIFAR and the new reactor, OPAL, will operate simultaneously for the first six months of OPAL operation for the quality testing of isotopes. This means that Australia will continue to have an operating reactor if OPAL runs into any problems. ARPANSA informs us that this six-month window may be extended if necessary. So it is totally irresponsible for the government to continue to say that patients in need will be left stranded without medical isotopes if the new reactor is not up and running. There is no suggestion that the old reactor will stop producing isotopes unless the new reactor is ready.

It is also the case that the current Lucas Heights reactor, HIFAR, shuts down for maintenance on a regular basis. The last major shutdown was back in 2004. During these regular and planned shutdowns, the major isotopes used in Australia are imported from overseas, especially from South Africa. The government will always have this option if the new or the old reactor has to stop production for any reason. There are some short-lived isotopes that are not available during a shutdown, but this has been and will continue to be the case during any regular shutdowns of the new reactor as well. The government has set up a series of deadlines to convince us that a waste dump has to be located in the Northern Territory urgently, but these deadlines have no relation to reality. It is just a deadline set up for the sole purpose of being knocked over, which of course brings us back to the dump.

The government’s case for rushing this legislation through this year and for adopting such extreme measures as overriding community dissent and any territory, state or federal laws that get in the way is built on a house of cards. Labor accept the need for a national waste dump, but we will not ride roughshod over the wishes of Territorians or any other local communities that will have radioactive waste transported along their streets and highways. Labor believe that we must bring the community with us on a waste dump, something the government seems to have never understood in its nine long years of trampling over the Australian community. And Labor is not alone in this fight. We are joined not only by the Northern Territory and many states but by local Indigenous groups. I received a letter on Friday from the Central Land Council opposing the waste dump in the Northern Territory—a demonstration of how far the government
has to go to establish a waste dump in this country. The Central Land Council, the traditional owners of two of the three possible sites, inform me that they are strongly opposed to the Commonwealth radioactive waste management facility being located at either site or on any part of their country. They go on to say that of primary concern is the need to keep their country safe and healthy for present and future generations and to be able to continue to use their country for hunting and getting bush tucker.

This idea of community consent and consultation is not new. The National Energy Agency of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development insists:

In order to build confidence in the process—this is the process of establishing a waste dump—it is important that it can be explained and, even more important, that it can be understood as being open, transparent, fair and broadly participatory. To achieve openness and transparency there must be appropriate procedures in which stakeholders and the public can participate and validate claims of trust, legitimacy and authenticity ... Actions and decisions must be justified.

The International Atomic Energy Agency advises in its Radioactive waste management status and trends update:

It is now widely believed that an important element in establishing public confidence in a particular waste management strategy is the perceived trust and credibility of the implementing organization and of the regulatory authority. Establishing trust can be enhanced when an inclusive approach to public involvement is adopted from the beginning of the planning process to help ensure that all those who wish to take part in the process have an opportunity to express their views and have access to information on how public comments have been considered and addressed.

Those words—trust, credibility and inclusiveness—might as well be Swahili to this government. It has absolutely no idea of what these words mean or why they might be important in the process of selecting a site for a nuclear waste dump. This government cannot engender trust when it shuts out the public’s ability to question and know. It cannot have any credibility left as it overrides the major environmental and Indigenous heritage legislation. It cannot be inclusive if it peddles untruths about the waste dump and refuses to hear the concerns of Territorians. For all of these reasons Labor will oppose these bills.

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

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

Mr TUCKEY (O’Connor) (7.51 pm)—I find myself from time to time getting to speak immediately after the member for Jagajaga or ‘Naganaga’, whichever word you want to use. The fact of life is that on each occasion I keep writing down things she says, such as ‘trust’ and ‘peddling untruths’. There are a few truths in this debate. The first is that if a doctor injects the isotopes that she refers to, radioactive isotopes, into a human body—and I read in my briefing notes that such treatments occur 400,000 times a year—those isotopes clearly do not kill the recipient. In other words, the doctor dons his rubber gloves as he is obliged to do, picks up the syringe—or whatever implement is so used—and injects a radioactive product. This brings all sorts of benefits to the patient. When he strips those gloves off, notwithstanding that the product he has just used has not killed anyone, the gloves are low-level radioactive waste.

Here is the member for Jagajaga carrying on as though the locality eventually selected by this government—and I will return to that shortly—is going to glow in the dark: ‘It will be a new feature for tourism in the Northern
Territory; you will be able to pick it as you fly up to Darwin. But of course the yellowcake that comes from Olympic Dam—which the Northern Territory government is most happy to go right up its railway line and which brings work to its wharfies because they load it onto ships up there to take to whatever part of the world it goes—does not glow in the dark. You cannot pick up the new train going to Darwin by the number of drums of yellowcake that are on it, but that is more radioactive than 90 per cent of the waste that is proposed to be stored in this locality.

Before my speech is over I propose to read in full a letter I have written to the Chief Minister of the Northern Territory. I say to her, as I say to every state Premier, that she is downright un-Australian. There is a possibility—and I am no expert on this—that within this stock of low- and medium-level radioactive waste there is something that, if included in a traditional bomb exploded somewhere in the underground rail system of Sydney or Melbourne, might turn it from an instant killing mechanism to one that would have longer-term implications. There may be something that strong. The argument of the member for Jagajaga is that that is an acceptable risk and that the Australian government should go on having various levels of radioactive waste stored in basements—stored all over the countryside—but it cannot be accommodated in land which for 30 years has been identified as a defence establishment.

The member for Jagajaga never bothered to play the Aboriginal heritage and land rights cards, and no doubt the member for Lingiari will develop that theme, but the fact is that this land where the facility is proposed has been in the hands of the Department of Defence for 30 years. It is hardly an area for gathering bush tucker but, if it is, it is a question of who is the trespasser because the High Court, in settling native title claims, did clarify the issue of rights of entry and rights of title. I would imagine the 30-year period of ‘ownership according to our laws’ would be significant in that regard.

Why is it that the member for Jagajaga had to have a cheap shot like she did at lunchtime when our Prime Minister was trying to congratulate me and the Leader of the Opposition for long service in this place? I am not prepared to play politics with the service contributed by the member for Brand, but she could not help herself. Yet she accuses the government of bringing this legislation into the House for political reasons. Excuse me, there are no politics on our side on this issue. Every state Labor government, where the power of land management is much stronger than of course in the territories, has played the political ace of hearts. They have said, ‘Not in my backyard.’ I think she quoted some people in the nuclear industry saying people have got to be educated. I would agree with that entirely, but it would not be a bad idea if when we have such a debate we try to tell people the reality of the situation.

The reality is that a pair of rubber gloves that has just been part of the process of injecting a radioactive isotope into a person’s body is unlikely to kill the next person who picks them up. But the member for Jagajaga wants us to believe that. She wants us to believe that this facility will glow in the dark. It is silly and it is wrong. You should not frighten people when a government is seriously trying to find a remote area facility in which to store radioactive waste at various levels. We do have accumulated waste at Lucas Heights, and of course it should not be that close to Sydney, not because it is likely to blow up but because, as I said earlier, it could get into the hands of terrorists. It is no matter of pride to this government or anyone else that a mob of protesters managed to walk into that facility and prove that its secu-
rity was below an acceptable level, but how much of the waste of that facility should be not in the most secure facility because it might be used by a terrorist group and used in a dirty bomb? They could not make a nuclear device from it, but they could mix it up with TNT or something else and cause considerable harm in one of our more densely populated areas.

Why would anyone argue that in the circumstances the government of the day was not entitled, in the interests of the Australian people, to create a facility? Why do we think we need this new legislation? The member for Jagajaga wants to bring in all sorts of technicalities. The fact is that every state government has brought in legislation that says, ‘Not in my backyard,’ and so has the Chief Minister of the Northern Territory. For what purpose? To frighten people and to try and gain a political benefit. I would imagine that our government would be quite happy for this problem to go away—but it does not.

The difference between us and those in the Labor Party is that we have stood up and bitten the bullet, and with this legislation we will go to a defence area in the Northern Territory and put in a proper, secure facility to look after this stuff.

As a result it is questionable whether other states will use it. They are so concerned about protecting their communities from this ‘dreadful situation’ that they would rather have this material in the basement of some hospital than away in a proper remote area facility, constructed in compliance with all the international rules to which we contribute. Why would you do that? Why would you leave people in such a situation? And why do you call it ‘a dump’? It is not a dump; it is clearly going to be quite expensive. It is clearly going to be a very secure facility to protect Australians from the waste that has been accumulated in their own interest.

The member for Jagajaga was at pains to tell us that the isotopes were a good idea. She came up with all sorts of things. She wanted to tell us that we did not need this legislation because we already have the power. But Clare Martin does not think we have. The state premiers do not think we have, because they have all passed other legislation. What is the point of that argument? The issue is to be decided in this parliament by vote, and the member for Jagajaga has told us that she does not believe the Australian people should be protected from the very dangers that she makes so much of. She thinks we should store this material in basements in Melbourne and Sydney. She thinks we should end up with an accumulated store from the old Lucas Heights facility before we open the new one. Why would you do that, when in fact we have millions of square kilometres in Australia where virtually nobody even walks? Surely that is the place for it.

I am not at all ashamed to say that when the people from Pangaea came here with the suggestion for an international repository within Australia I was somewhat convinced by their argument. Their argument is that throughout the world there are only a couple of very safe geological localities, and only one that has the political stability—in other words, that has both kinds of stability. That is Australia and, in fact, my state of Western Australia. I am quite happy, as I have said to the Chief Minister of the Northern Territory, to say that if I were the Premier of Western Australia I would be looking at it very closely.

The suggestion of the agriculture minister in the Northern Territory that it is the end of the world for agricultural production in the Northern Territory is somewhat put to bed by the fact that one of France’s biggest reprocessing facilities is virtually alongside the Champagne district. I bet you that tomorrow
the winners down in Melbourne—and possibly a couple of Labor members who picked the right one with their bet—will drink some French champagne. The fact of life is that, for all the procrastination of the member for Jagajaga, that is made right alongside a fuel reprocessing facility. People have not given up. This proves how silly some of these arguments are, and this is not legislation about anything like that.

I have always worried about a circumstance arising where some terrorist group or some mad nation get some of that plutonium or something that we all know is unaccounted for in some part of the world. They might send it to this country, per favour of a rocket. That is not the sort of delivery I would like. I would like to think it was all cleaned up. I have got to say that, in terms of storage, even internationally, were I in a position to influence that outcome—and I recognise that the Australian people are not ready for that—I would think it might be helping the world.

But today we are just talking about helping Australians. It has been thrown up that a few people in the Aboriginal community might not like it. A number of other issues have been thrown up, too. The fact of life is that we run a nuclear facility in Australia and at great cost we are building a new one because it has very significant medical advantages. As a result of that, we get these waste matters that have got to be dealt with. I find it outrageous that a series of state premiers have thought that the politics matter more than the protection of the Australian people. I find it outrageous that when the Commonwealth is forced to go to a facility—which probably is not as good as some that might be in our state of Western Australia, Mr Deputy Speaker Wilkie, in terms of protecting the public and other factors—we are told, ‘You shouldn’t be there; you should be somewhere else.’ Where else? I have not heard that from the opposition. Maybe the member for Lingiari will help us.

Just to conclude my remarks, I got a letter from the Chief Minister telling me that the end of the world would be tomorrow if this thing happened in the Northern Territory. I replied as follows:

Dear Chief Minister

I refer to your letter of the 18th October ... Your letter is severely deficient in that it fails to identify any other site within Australia which would better serve the needs of all Australians in terms of the need to protect them from both the immediate dangers—

relating to exposure to nuclear waste—

and terrorist attack arising from the present situation where waste could be easily obtained and combined with conventional explosives to make a dirty bomb.

To avoid logical criticism, let me say I consider that certain remote areas of my State of WA are geologically the most suitable for such a facility and were I the Premier of WA I would do my duty to both my State and the National citizenry by offering reasoned co-operation. It is clear that your Government and the other State Governments see much more benefit in silly politics than a wider responsibility to 20 million Australians.

That your Territory has been chosen is no fault of a responsible Australian Government but of the seven other Premiers and more particularly those of South Australia and Western Australia whose States clearly represent the best choice of site. The letter should have referred to ‘six other premiers and one other Chief Minister’. The letter went on:

Having disposed of the NIMBY issue, you might choose to write to me and explain why quantities of radioactive materials of various intensity levels should continue to be stored in a myriad of insecure locations throughout Australia.

Clearly a properly constructed and managed site in the remote areas of your Territory is the best protection for your citizens and those of other States and Territories, compared to the present situation.
Whilst I recognise the impossibility of convincing Australians that our Nation might be the best storage for the World’s scattered uranium and plutonium waste, I sincerely trust that Australia does not receive a quantity of it—these substances—by means of a terrorist or mad Nation’s rocket.
I will support the legislation and if I have any opportunity to speak will condemn those who put politics above national safety.
That is what this legislation is all about. It is about national safety and a responsible government biting the bullet and staring down the activists while our opponents, in typical style, do not do it.

This issue is like tax and a few other matters. They are not responsibilities simply of the government; they are responsibilities of the parliament. I am delighted to see that there might be some resurgence. I know that Mr Swan, the member for Lilley, has been out talking to big business and trying to sell them the idea that IR is bad for them. I understand that he has received a very negative response.

But the fact of life is that this is an issue where the remote areas of Australia should be utilised. A proper facility should be put in place. Every state Labor Premier has played politics. The Northern Territory, unfortunately for them, do not have the same amount of constitutional power and this government has been forced to go there where there are probably better sites in other states. It is no credit to the premiers of South Australia and Western Australia that a facility for all Australia has not been put in one of those states. Please let me remind you that every time a physician takes his gloves off, having injected a radioactive isotope into someone’s blood, the gloves constitute low-level radioactive material. That is what the Labor Party wants to save Australia from. (Time expired)

Debate adjourned.
Question agreed to.

Original question put:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The House divided. [8.22 pm]

(The Deputy Speaker—Mr Wilkie)

Ayes………… 80

Noes………… 56

Majority……… 24

AYS

NOES
Question agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Consideration in Detail

Bill—by leave—taken as a whole.

Ms GILLARD (Lalor) (8.24 pm)—There are a series of in-detail matters that the opposition now seeks clarification of, and I would be interested of course to see whether or not the Minister for Health and Ageing will bother providing that clarification. No—all he does is take the salary and go for the occasional jog, and he calls that a full-time job.

There are a number of matters of detail that do need to be clarified in relation to this bill, which will have an effect on some of the poorest and sickest members of our community. We now have the heroes of the coalition sitting on the benches in front of us but, apart from the member for McMillan, not one of them had the guts to come into this place and defend this bill. That is because not one of them went out to their constituents at the last election and said, ‘Vote for me because I want to tear away the PBS safety net.’ Not one of them did that and not one of them was prepared to defend it—an act of gross dishonesty on the part of all of them, and it was also an act of gross gutlessness when this bill was being debated.

But, if they now sit in the House, they might actually learn how bad this bill will be for their constituents when we seek clarification of what this bill means. In the absence of the minister for health—who is too arrogant to consider doing what ought to be the ordinary work of the minister for health, who takes his salary under false pretences—we will ask these questions of the minister at the table and seek clarification. We know that the changes in the bill regarding the PBS safety net mean that it will be harder for people to hit the safety net. We also know that, as a result of copayment changes—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Wilkie)—Order! Honourable members will kindly leave the chamber or resume their seats and stop caucusing in the corridors.

Ms GILLARD—I cannot imagine anybody is caucusing with the member for O’Connor. It would take two! What we know about the PBS is that, since the copayment changes—

Mr Martin Ferguson—He has Tollner!

Ms GILLARD—One can only imagine what ‘intelligence’ the member for Solomon and the member for O’Connor could cook up. What we do know about PBS scripts, after the copayment changes earlier this year, is that concessional scripts have grown by only one per cent—which is a very low rate of growth—and that general scripts have
dropped by 5.1 per cent. As I said in my speech on the second reading, I would love to believe that that was due to an outbreak of wellness in our community, but I suspect it was not. I suspect that it was due to an affordability problem for people when they came to get their medication.

We would like clarification from the parliamentary secretary at the table on the proposed changes in this bill that will make it harder to reach the safety net. What modelling has the government done either through the Department of Health and Ageing or through external agencies of the effect of these safety net changes on the rate of growth of the PBS? What modelling has it done on the effect of these changes on the ability of patients with chronic illness to afford the medications they need? In particular, does this modelling strip the data down to socioeconomic groups and, if so, what is the predicted effect for the lowest socioeconomic quintile?

We are deliberately asking those questions, because we know that NATSEM modelling shows that the PBS is the most highly progressive part of the health system, with two-fifths of total PBS outlays directed at the poorest one-fifth of Australians. Two-fifths of PBS outlays go to the poorest one-fifth of Australians. So I am specifically asking what modelling the government has undertaken through either the department of health or external agencies to show what effect these safety net changes will have on that group. We are most concerned about that group’s access to medicines and whether or not these safety net changes will compromise the ability of people in that group, many of whom would be people with chronic illnesses, to access their medication. I ask that the parliamentary secretary detail that modelling for the parliament. If that modelling has not been obtained, because the government is so arrogant, so extreme that it has brought this bill in without considering those effects, then that should be disclosed. (Extension of time granted) I will put all my questions, and I trust the parliamentary secretary is writing them down and is going to answer each of them.

Mr Pyne—Indeed I am.

Mr Nairn—Making detailed notes!

Ms GILLARD—Having given us the modelling—perhaps having tabled it—presumably the next question that the parliamentary secretary will be answering is: will the savings that are generated from this safety net change be reinvested into the PBS, or will they be sent out of the health portfolio and off to consolidated revenue or off to some other part of the budget? We are asking that deliberately. What we know about the government is that in the last election campaign they cobbled together in an incredible flurry the 12½ per cent price cutbacks policy to generate savings on the PBS, not to reinvest in the PBS to assist with PBS sustainability—even though the Treasurer had been wandering around for years talking about PBS sustainability—but to grab those savings out of the PBS, send them out of the health budget and off into other portfolios. We want to know whether the savings being generated by this safety net change are going out of the health budget to other portfolios or consolidated revenue, or whether this measure is about reinvesting into the PBS.

Turning to the other aspect of the bill—the 20-day provision, a new provision supposedly to stop the hoarding of medications by the filling of multiple scripts within 20 days—the bill envisages that there will be some types of medicines exempt from this ruling. What we would like the parliamentary secretary at the table to tell us is which types of medicine will be exempt from this ruling. This is a ruling where, if you go back and fill your PBS scripts within 20 days, it
will be far more costly. For example, you have a child who has asthma, they take Ventolin and a variety of other PBS listed medications, they lose their schoolbag and the lot, so you go back to fill the script again within the 20-day period. That will be far more costly for you under this legislation: that is the effect of the 20-day rule.

We are told some medicines will be exempt. We want the parliamentary secretary to tell us which medicines will be exempt. We want the parliamentary secretary to tell us how the Minister for Health and Ageing will decide which medicines will be exempt from the 20-day rule. Will the minister make it up as he goes along? Will he toss a dart at a whole list of medicine names, and the ones that the dart falls on he will say are exempt? How will he go through this process? If you had another minister for health, you might say they would take expert advice, but the one thing we know about this minister for health is that taking expert advice is not something he believes in. The evidence for that is that he took calcium off the PBS in the budget without ever asking any expert about the health consequences of that. So what will be exempt? Have any decisions been made about that already? How will the minister decide which medicines will be exempt? Will he take expert advice on that? If so, who are the expert bodies? How will a person who needs to renew a script get the benefit of that exemption? Will they get the benefit of that exemption by going to a doctor or going to a pharmacist?

Let us just take an example. Let us say that the minister for health takes it into his head to exempt all asthma medications. Maybe he is persuaded by the evidence of the people who have to run round with Ventolin puffers all the time and who might lose those puffers. That is not something that should be comprehended by the 20-day rule. If I have lost my Ventolin puffer and need to get a new script—I might have a repeat script—filled within the 20 days, will the doctor issue me with the exemption, or will a pharmacist issue me with the exemption? Depending upon the answer to that question, there is an affordability issue. If it is the doctor, there is an affordability issue about re-attending at the GP, who may or may not bulk-bill. In many locations in Australia you cannot get a bulk-billing GP, and the member at the table—the member for Lingiari—could tell us all about that. If you need to go back to your doctor to get that exemption, that will necessarily mean a major out-of-pocket cost for the person who is seeking the exemption. So how will that be done? (Extension of time granted)

I know the parliamentary secretary at the table is busily taking shorthand and writing all of this down. We will expect in-detail answers to each of these questions. But, finally, can we get the answer to the question: do you get an exemption from the doctor, or do you get an exemption from the pharmacist? There is a major out-of-pocket cost that could relate to people, depending on where that is. Then we would like the minister, I mean, the parliamentary secretary at the table—I have given him a promotion, but at least he is doing a day's work—

Mr Pyne—More than I can say for most of your people over there.

Ms Gillard—More than we can say for the minister for health; much more than we can say for the minister for health, who is, of course, not here because he does not care about the PBS, except when he is looking for it as a source of cutbacks. In terms of the 20-day rule, how will arrangements be made for someone who needs to fill repeat prescriptions within 20 days because they are intending to travel? If the answer to that is going to be that you need to attend at the doctor for the exemption, that has the co-
payment problem of paying the doctor. If you are going to attend at the pharmacist, what evidence will you be required to produce to the pharmacist that you are travelling within the 20-day period? Are we going to have pharmacists standing at pharmacy counters around the country scrutinising airline tickets and passports to ascertain whether or not it is reasonable for someone to fill their scripts within this period? Exactly how it is going to be done?

Then we would like the parliamentary secretary at the table to explain to us what the government believes the dimensions of the hoarding problem are, which is of course the justification given for this 20-day rule, and whether the government, in devising this proposal, considered other alternatives in dealing with the problem of hoarding—whether the 20-day rule was the only option that suggested itself or whether other alternatives were canvassed and discarded. Clearly the 20-day rule has a number of problems in terms of applicability and working in a rational pattern. You do not have to take my word for that. Pharmacists, the Pharmacy Guild of Australia and many around the country have made the very same point: they consider that it is unworkable.

Then I would like the parliamentary secretary at the table to indicate whether or not Labor can at any point expect a response to the range of initiatives that it has suggested to assist with PBS sustainability. This range of initiatives was outlined in a speech—which is in the possession of the minister for health; I know that because I handed it to him—that I gave on 25 August. The speech contains a number of measures to do with PBS sustainability which we say are smarter measures to gain sustainability in the PBS, but as yet we have received no government response to these very sensible proposals.

Mr PYNE (Sturt—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Health and Ageing) (8.38 pm)—I thank the member for Lalor for her obvious consideration in detail of the legislation that the government has put to the parliament. I will, with all my inadequacies, do my best to answer some of her questions, which might be better put to the Minister for Health and Ageing. As I am not the minister responsible for this bill, I would invite the member for Lalor to place those questions that are difficult to answer on the Notice Paper, and I am sure the minister for health will answer them in due course and within the provisions of the standing orders.

Obviously, the member for Lalor has been engaging in a bit of grandstanding over this piece of legislation. In fact, not long after the budget was brought down the Labor Party’s position on whether they would support or oppose this bill was somewhat vague. Members would remember that this bill, with its inclusion of a 20-day rule and the introduction of an increase to the PBS safety net thresholds, was part of the budget process. As the House would be aware, this government believes very strongly in a sustainable Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme. People would also be aware that the PBS has been growing at 12 per cent a year for the last 10 years and it is one of the fastest growing areas of government expenditure in the budget. For that reason, the Australian public elect coalition governments to manage budgets and government programs well. They usually elect us to clean up the mess after Labor has been in power for a long period. That is what they did in 1996 and that is what they will keep doing, hopefully, because we cannot afford to go back to Labor.

So the public expect us to manage the PBS in a sustainable way. The way that it had been growing was obviously unsustainable, so the government introduced changes to the PBS safety net thresholds in an at-
tempt to make it sustainable for not only today’s Australians but also future Australians. I am sure the opposition would agree that the PBS is an important, useful and fair part of our system. As the member for Lalor said, and I agree with her, it is geared towards low-income earners—in particular, pensioners and concession card holders who might otherwise struggle to afford often life-saving medicines that are important to their capacity to live a full life. All Australians know that one of the main reasons that we exist as a civilised society is so that everybody in our society, rich or poor, can exist as healthfully as possible.

A number of questions were asked by the member for Lalor. Regarding modelling and whether the money is to be reinvested, the member for Lalor would know that, when Health is asked to put proposals forward as part of the budgetary process, most of those proposals involve changes to spending on one side to help expenditure in other parts of the portfolio. No-one could claim that the government has cut health spending over the last 10 years. In fact, since I arrived in the parliament, which was in 1993, I think health has grown faster than any other area of government spending. Since the member for Lingiari has been here even longer, he surely would agree with me. I remember that when I came into the parliament in 1993 spending on health was about eight per cent of the budget; it is now twice as much.

Mr Snowdon interjecting—

Mr PYNE—The member for Lingiari says he had quite a head of hair then. Actually, I think he is lying about that! So, over time, the government has obviously increased its spending on health. If the member for Lalor’s questions suggest that we are somehow trying to make cost savings out of the PBS, she knows full well that the PBS is increasing as a proportion of government expenditure every year, and we are trying to make it sustainable for the long term.

Regarding the exemptions to the 20-day rule, which was a good and fair question, medicines to be exempted from the requirement to not seek a repeat within 20 days of a prescription would be medicines like antibiotics, which are often prescribed with fewer than 20 days as the repeat, for immediate colds and flu that can be particularly serious for children and older people. So for antibiotics the less than 20-day rule would not apply. The member for Lalor mentioned asthma. It is likely that asthma products will be exempted from the 20-day rule. Morphine is another example that the member for Lalor might like to be aware of, as are drugs that deal with psychoses, as it would be unfair of the government to impose a 20-day repeat rule on those. (Extension of time granted) Those are some examples of some of the medicines that would be exempted from the 20-day rule.

How that will be brought about is currently being considered by the government, but we will consult with the appropriate people. There will be a range of people. The Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee is an example of one group we could consult with, but there are other experts in the field whom we could consult with. I am certain that the minister for health would not make those decisions without proper advice.

Every time he makes an important decision he seeks proper advice, as you would expect, and he continues to do so.

As to who would be responsible for allowing the exemption, at the moment pharmacists are responsible for the immediate supply requirements, and pharmacists will continue to provide that role. There would not be a necessity for people seeking medicines to return to a GP; they would be able to seek that exemption for immediate supply from a
pharmacist, so nothing would change. Pharmacists are the best placed people to make those decisions because they usually provide medicines to the same person over and over again. Most people keep going to the same pharmacist for their medicines. Pharmacists know the people they are dealing with and they are likely to know who really requires an exemption and immediate supply.

The member for Lalor also suggested that we should pick up some of the ALP’s good ideas for changing the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme to make it more sustainable. I am sure I speak on behalf of the Minister for Health and Ageing in saying that, if the ALP does have any good ideas, we would be happy to pick them up—but, judging by past performance, that is probably unlikely. The member for Lalor thought up the Medicare Gold policy for the ALP at the last election. She is still recovering politically from that, which must be a bit of an embarrassment for her. Maybe with a week at the Golden Door, she might come up with another Medicare Gold policy. If the ALP does have any good ideas, no doubt the minister for health will be happy to put those into practice—but, on past experience, we will be waiting a very long time for a good idea to come from the member for Lalor.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Jenkins)—The question is that the bill be agreed to.

Question agreed to.

Third Reading

Mr PYNE (Sturt—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Health and Ageing) (8.46 pm)—by leave—I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

COMMONWEALTH RADIOACTIVE WASTE MANAGEMENT BILL 2005

Cognate bill:

COMMONWEALTH RADIOACTIVE WASTE MANAGEMENT (RELATED AMENDMENT) BILL 2005

Second Reading

Debate resumed.

Mr SNOWDON (Lingiari) (8.46 pm)—Firstly, let me acknowledge the presence of my friends from Yuelamu School, north-west of Alice Springs, who have come here to learn about the parliament. I know that they are intensely interested in the issue of nuclear waste management, as it very much affects communities near them. I welcome them to the parliament and thank them for their patience. They have been here for at least an hour, sitting through the last debate, which, I have to say, was riveting. The performance of the shadow minister, the member for Lalor, was, as always, superb and an education for all of us. Those of us who are interested in this debate will have learned a great deal from listening to the shadow spokesperson, the member for Jagajaga, Jenny Macklin. In her contribution, she articulated in a very precise and concise way the arguments against the acceptance of the Commonwealth Radioactive Waste Management Bill 2005 and moved a second reading amendment which I encourage the government to support. Should the government not support the amendment, the opposition is committed to voting against this legislation.

I am particularly concerned about the legislation because, as you would be aware, Mr Deputy Speaker Jenkins, the sites being proposed for nuclear waste disposal are all in the Northern Territory. This is a result of the fact that the government was unable to secure the agreement of another state to accommodate its desire to have a repository for radioactive waste. Because the government could not override the states, it chose to intervene in the affairs of the Northern Territory. I think I am right in saying that this is
the first occasion in this parliament where the federal government has initiated legislation to override the rights and interests of the people of the Northern Territory. In the past, there was a piece of legislation to do with euthanasia and a motion by a government member, but it was not government policy. Here, the government is making a decision to intervene in the affairs of the Northern Territory and impose upon the people of the Northern Territory, against their wishes, repositories for radioactive waste.

Of course, we know that when the Minister for Education, Science and Training made the announcement on Friday, 15 July this year that three sites in my electorate were to be considered for the nuclear waste dump he contemptuously said:

… why … can’t people in the middle of nowhere have low level and intermediate level waste?

I ask my friends from Yuelamu: do you believe you live in the middle of nowhere? It is their brothers and sisters, their cousins, their mates and other Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory whose land will be despoiled by the government’s approach. There are people who live in the middle of nowhere—much to the chagrin of government. They are very concerned about the nature of their land. They are attached to their country and they are very concerned about this proposal from the government. What the minister needs to know is that the people of the Northern Territory do not want a nuclear waste dump thrust upon them without their consideration and agreement. What they want is a fair go for all Australians, not just for some. They want the decision to site a nuclear waste facility to be based on best practice social, environmental and democratic processes.

If Australia is to have a purpose-built facility in one place, that place should be where it can be stored most appropriately and safely in accordance with international regulations. International regulations do not include legislation to ensure political convenience. Given the actions of the Commonwealth government since July, Territorians in increasing numbers are opposing the disposal of nuclear waste in the Northern Territory. You will, no doubt, hear the plain-tive cries from the Country Liberal Party representative in this place, the member for Solomon, Mr Tollner, and his friend in the other place, Senator Scullion. They crow about the fact that some people, including the Northern Land Council and its former chairman, Galarrwuy Yunupingu, have come out in favour of a nuclear waste dump. You might hear that they want an amendment to legislation to make it possible for Aboriginal land-holders to offer up their land for consideration in return for financial gain. That is more an indication of a desire to get access to the real economy than an indication of support for a dump site—and that needs to be clearly understood.

The NLC and its members are entitled to their view. However, it is not a view which is shared by Aboriginal people elsewhere in the Northern Territory. Last Friday on the Northern Territory edition of the ABC TV program Stateline, Central Land Council director David Ross said unequivocally that the traditional owners of the two Central Australian sites proposed by the federal government do not want the sites on their land. Mr Ross went on to say that, if the NLC chose to do things differently, that was up to them. He said:

It’s a decision they have to live with into the future; it’s not something people in Central Australia are a party to.

The Central Land Council has written to Minister Nelson to let him know that the council and the people of Central Australia are against having a waste dump site anywhere in Central Australia. That is the posi-
tion of the Aboriginal people of Central Australia, and they have made it clear on a number of occasions in meetings and consultations. The Central Land Council has written to me, and I seek leave to table that correspondence.

Leave granted.

Mr Snowdon—They have made it clear that the traditional owners of both the Alcoota-Harts Range and Mt Everard sites are strongly opposed to a Commonwealth radioactive waste management facility being located at either site or on any part of their country. I take that to mean there is no community acceptance. Further, in its letter to me, the Central Land Council expressed extreme concern about the intent and implications of the Commonwealth Radioactive Waste Management Bill 2005. They consider that this legislation, which is being pushed through, limits traditional owners’ rights, overrides Territory government laws and pushes aside Commonwealth environmental and heritage protection legislation at the site selection stage. They consider this ‘a deeply disturbing development’. Those issues were outlined in great detail by the shadow minister.

The Territory’s opposition to the site has been expressed at public meetings, in street marches, at market stalls, in letters to the editor, on talkback radio, by the Territory government and, in a rare show of unity indeed, by the Territory’s loyal opposition, the Country Liberal Party—of whom I will speak more later. I am sure the Territory federal CLP representatives have had numerous letters, emails, phone calls and faxes opposing the siting of the dump in the Territory. I am sure that the Territory’s CLP members know of the disgust being expressed by Territorians. The Territory assembly supported a bill banning nuclear waste dumps. The Labor Party went to the last Territory election—which honourable members will recall they won by a landslide, utterly routing the CLP—opposing a nuclear waste dump. It was very clearly part of their platform. You cannot say you did not know.

There are three key themes to this sorry episode: the duplicity of the federal government towards the people of the Northern Territory and Australia; the arrogance of the federal government to make this decision not on scientific or environmental grounds but for political convenience—they have made it because they can; and the crass ineptitude and opportunism of the Country Liberal Party representatives in Canberra.

Firstly, I will go to duplicity. Cast your minds back to just before the last federal election. We were all told that the federal government, having had a very negative response from the states—including New South Wales, which is the biggest producer of waste—was looking offshore. As recently as 30 September last year, the Minister for the Environment and Heritage said:

... the Commonwealth is not pursuing any options anywhere on the mainland ...

and later:

... we can be quite categorical about that ... the Northern Territory can take that as a categorical assurance.

This ‘categorical assurance’, as we have now learnt, was just a fib. It was a lie, and a classic example of this government’s double-speak. It ranks with core and non-core promises, the GST being ‘dead and buried’ before the 1996 election and asylum seekers throwing their children overboard. It is yet another mealy-mouthed insult to the intelligence of the Australian people.

What we were not told at the time was that the National Store Advisory Committee
had investigated 22 potential sites throughout Australia—mainly land owned by the Defence department—for their suitability. I would ask the member for O’Connor to look at the sites that were proposed. One of those sites was in the Territory’s Fishers Ridge near Katherine. It is one of the three sites that has now been chosen by the Commonwealth. That was the only site in the Northern Territory listed by this site committee, and it was unsuitable because of its hydrology.

Dr Peter Jolly from the Northern Territory Department of Environment was involved in a three-year study of the hydro-geology of the Fishers Ridge site. On Monday 25 July 2005 on ABC radio News in Science, his conclusion on the proposal for a facility on this site was:

If there were any leaks from a facility at this site it would be one of the worst sites in Australia in terms of having an impact on ecosystems and an impact on an aquifer that is used for drinking and for other water uses.

For the benefit of the House, rainfall in the Fishers Ridge area can be over 2 metres in 2 months in some years. Water falling on the area flows directly or indirectly into the Katherine and Daly Rivers, both of which are important for biodiversity. So much for the member for Solomon claiming on ABC radio on 19 July that the Territory was the safest Commonwealth land on which to store nuclear waste. What environmental expertise was this statement based on?

Six sites were deemed to be suitable—and some most suitable. Five were in New South Wales and one in Victoria. One site was within cooee of this building. All the sites, bar the one in the ACT, are in seats held by the government. The most suitable site was near Narrandera in New South Wales. There are no prizes for guessing what happened to that list. The government was not prepared to put one of its own through the wringer and possibly lose a seat. Instead, it is prepared to sacrifice the member for Solomon. This list was quietly shelved. Later we were told that the new list was a result of a desktop study. When I drew attention to this list earlier this year, one of the advisers in the office of the Minister for Education, Science and Training tried to shrug it off as obsolete. Well, it is not obsolete. The site committee chose appropriately. The offshore option proved to be no option at all, as we already know.

There were suspicions some time earlier this year that the Territory was back on the agenda because the government had nowhere to go. Typically, the CLP senator for the Northern Territory tried to show he was on the case. On 9 June, in response to local media inquiries, he said, ‘Not on my watch.’ Not on his watch, indeed! The senator said that he would vote against such a proposal—I will come back to him in a minute. Obviously his view did not count for much in cabinet.

Debate interrupted.

**ADJOURNMENT**

The SPEAKER—Order! It being 9 pm, I propose the question:

That the House do now adjourn.

**Welfare to Work**

Mr HAYES (Werriwa) (9.00 pm)—I take the opportunity to make some comments on the recent statements by the Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations when he finally came clean about the extent of this government’s agenda on the ABC Television Insiders program a week ago. I refer in particular to the following comments:

We don’t make any excuse for this. We believe that the best form of welfare that a person can have is to have a job.

He went on to say:
Getting a foot in the door in a labour market is much more important and useful for that person than any dependants he or she might have.

I must admit that I was pretty shocked at this frank admission by the minister. It became pretty clear early on on that Sunday morning that this government is not about providing training and support for those moving from welfare to work. It became clear that there is no intention to provide the support services required, such as affordable child care, for those making the efforts to move from welfare to work. It was abundantly clear that this government’s idea of welfare reform is to make sure that you are forced to take a job no matter what the wages and conditions are. This might sound attractive to some people at the moment, but the attitude will soon catch up with the rest of the workforce. It may not be immediately obvious to many, but the problem with supporting such an approach is that it sets a new low benchmark for employment practices within business.

As people are forced onto AWAs undercutting established award rates of pay and conditions, what chance does a new employee have of negotiating better terms and conditions under such an arrangement? However, the world according to this government is pretty clear. As the minister said:

The greatest bargaining power people have got today is a shortage in the workforce.

Of course this is true for people who are in positions where there is a demand for their skills. Sadly, a work force shortage does not of itself create a demand for just any labour, and I am sure the minister would be aware that the work force is not homogeneous. It is the fact that labour is not homogeneous and that labour is not perfectly substitutable that blows a gaping hole in this government’s plan to shift people currently receiving welfare payments onto any job no matter what the arrangements are.

My electorate has a relatively high proportion of people who receive either disability support or parenting payments—approximately 11 per cent—and they fear this government’s agenda. They know that they will be worse off once the combined impact of the industrial relations and welfare changes are felt. These people have almost no bargaining power. The current skills shortage and associated demand has not helped them find work so far, and the introduction of a system under which they are forced to take anything that is offered to them is certainly not going to put them in a position through which they can get ahead. These are among Australia’s most vulnerable people and they essentially will have no real protection from exploitation. They will be presented with no choice: either they take what is offered or they lose their income support.

When you start to consider the operation of these policies, it is little wonder that the member for Macarthur recently removed a large sign advertising the location of his office in Campbelltown. Clearly he is afraid that people will find out where his office is and ask him to defend the government’s position on industrial relations and welfare reform.

I make no apologies for standing up for the rights of employees who want to protect their working conditions and entitlements as well as for those who deserve to be treated with dignity as they try to enter the work force. Encouraging people back to work needs to be about more than simply slashing wages and forcing the unemployed to accept a job no matter how bad the offer is. The attitude of this government is pretty clear: beggars cannot be choosers.

**Vietnamese Refugees**

Mr CADMAN (Mitchell) (9.04 pm)—I rise to draw attention to the fact that we are
celebrating 30 years of the arrival of refugees from Vietnam and also to draw the attention of the House to a so-called celebration being organised by the Socialist Republic of Vietnam of concerts in Sydney and Canberra. I find this so-called celebration very disturbing. The celebration really celebrates 60 years of a communist regime in Vietnam. That is a terrible insult for Vietnamese people who have come to Australia and who have taken up this country as their own. The communist regime of Vietnam is saying, ‘We were victorious in the war. We have a wonderful regime in Vietnam. Look what you have missed out on by becoming refugees and coming to Australia.’

I was part of that government that decided to welcome Vietnamese refugees to Australia. It has not been easy for many of them, but they have made a marvellous contribution to our society. They have worked hard and made sacrifices to have their children gain positions in all walks of life in Australian society. I want to pay tribute to them. There has been economic advance for them. But when one looks back to what has occurred in Vietnam through its single party state—restrictions on people’s freedom, their inability to move and people imprisoned for their beliefs in the Buddhist and Christian faiths—one can see that they have been penalised for speaking out for freedom.

I would encourage all Australians to avoid the celebration of 60 years of communist regime in the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, because what is really being celebrated is the loss of property and suffering and the death and crimes against freedom and humanity undertaken by that regime. Tragically, much of it still continues.

The population of 174,237 people who were reported in the 2001 census as speaking Vietnamese at home have come here as refugees. They have made this country their own. The Vietnamese-Australian community run numerous charities and have formed a part of fundraising ventures for the Royal Children’s Hospital and overseas natural disasters. Many members of the community have received Australia Day honours because of the contribution that they have made to this country.

Some of the things that have gone on at Hanoi’s request are really disturbing. At Hanoi’s request, Indonesia and Malaysia have destroyed boat people memorials because Hanoi does not want to be reminded that people actually left that country to escape the terror and the dictatorial attitudes of that regime. Vietnam has corruption problems. Last year Transparency International ranked the regime as 102nd in the world. Late this year it dropped Vietnam to 107th out of a total of 140 countries. The oppression continues. Religious leaders, such as the Most Venerable Thich Quang Do, are under house arrest. Last Easter the regime killed at least dozens of Montagnards in the central highlands who were demonstrating peacefully for their land and religious rights. The media, the unions and all associations are controlled by the Communist Party.

I want to pay tribute to a number of people who are so strong in their commitment to freedom and to the future of the Vietnamese people that they wish to protest against this 60-year celebration. They are Mr Trung Doan, Dr Tien Nguyen, Dr Cuong Bui, Mr Luyen Nguyen, Mr Bich Phan, Mr Cong Le and Mr Phong Nguyen. Those are the leaders of this community who stand for freedom. They are wonderful Australians, and I am proud to call them fellow Australians for the contribution that they have made fearlessly and unashamedly in the cause of freedom and the great attributes and great traditions of this nation. I am proud that we decided years ago that they should come to form part of
Australian society and I am proud of the contribution that they have made. (Time expired)

Mr Nguyen Tuong Van

Textile, Clothing and Footwear Industry

Ms ROXON (Gellibrand) (9.09 pm)—I would like to raise two matters in my short adjournment speech today. One is to simply associate myself with the motion that was moved earlier in the House calling for clemency for a young Australian who has been sentenced to death in Singapore. I want to declare very strongly, as many others in this House have, that I totally oppose the death penalty under all circumstances. I do not think it is in any way hypocritical to have this parliament move a motion when the person who has been sentenced to death is an Australian—because we are, after all, the Australian parliament. But I do think that more generally we need to be able to make our position as a country clear: that we oppose the death penalty, no matter what the nationality of the person whom it is being applied to, as a cruel, inhumane and degrading form of punishment. Obviously, we can really be more active in arguing against that within our region and also the broader international community.

The second matter that I want to raise is one of immediate local concern in my electorate of Gellibrand: the decline in the textile and clothing manufacturing industry in my electorate. Recently one of the major employers in my area, Feltex Carpets, closed its yarn-spinning operation in Braybrook, moving this arm of its operations to New Zealand. The decision has resulted in 205 jobs being lost in the region. The closure took effect as of last Friday, with employees having only three weeks notice of their impending retrenchment. Even though half of Feltex’s carpet sales are actually in the Australian market, it no longer feels that it is viable to continue this element of its production here. Clearly, it is a very disappointing decision and a great loss to our community, particularly for those 205 employees.

The clothing and textile industry has been severely restructured over the last few decades in Australia. Sadly, since my election in 1998, I have witnessed the closure of plants and the retrenchment of many workers in this industry, which used to make up the heart of my electorate. Whilst I have also been pleased to see the opening of new businesses, particularly in the new technology area—Lonely Planet and Playworks, for example—manufacturing, particularly the textile industry, is going through a pretty hard time.

The employment provisions that are offered under the TCF structural adjustment packages, such as those offered to workers through the Job Network, rarely meet the needs of a great number of textile, clothing and footwear workers who have often worked in this same industry for all their working lives, sometimes with the same company, and have often had very little exposure to the wider job market. Many come from non-English-speaking backgrounds and have had limited access to educational opportunities. So I am pleased that Feltex and the Textile, Clothing and Footwear Union of Australia have negotiated a range of benefits and a flexible restructuring arrangement for this particular round of retrenchments. Feltex have taken a responsible position towards supporting their workers in their transition from the TCF industry to other forms of employment. They have agreed to fund a project worker through the Textile, Clothing and Footwear Union to assist these workers to secure ongoing and permanent employment, either within the TCF industry or without.

I must note, however, that I am conscious that such arrangements are not always made by all employers. I fear that, with the new
industrial relations system that is about to be proposed this week in the parliament, these sorts of practical and sensible arrangements that are needed when people need support as they transition to other work are going to be fewer and farther between. We already have a contrast with the appropriate arrangements that have been set up by Feltex. Consider the persistent rumours in my electorate regarding the impending closure of Bradmill Textiles in Yarraville, a company that has received over the years extremely significant government support through the SIPS program. Rumours abound about retrenchments and a slow leak of jobs from this plant, and it seems that there is no mechanism to account for the government support afforded to this company. I think we as taxpayers are entitled to ask: do companies in receipt of federal monies owe an obligation to the taxpayer to provide a forthright and honest assessment of their intentions to continue in this industry?

Mr Jenkins—It is mutual obligation.

Ms ROXON—If they were social security recipients, as my colleague points out, there would be clear obligations upon them for the receipt of this money. I certainly believe that, should companies—as we have seen in other circumstances—want to take government money to assist in their manufacturing, they must make a commitment to staying in the industry to continue to employ people in our electorates. We have seen the example of Kodak, one closer to the member for Scullin’s seat, where it has happily taken money, spent all of that money and then packed up and left as soon as that money ran out. We need to make sure, if we are going to provide assistance to manufacturing companies, that they will use that money in good faith and keep operating in Australia. They owe the government and the Australian public a forthright assessment of their long-term intentions. (Time expired)

Indonesia: Religious Persecution

Mr FAWCETT (Wakefield) (9.14 pm)—In Iraq, beheadings have made front-page news as they have occurred over the past two years. Most people around the world have rightly condemned the actions of the groups concerned. Some did not. Some even blamed the West. Apologists highlighted the role they claimed Western nations have played in bringing about a situation which would lead individuals to such obscene acts. Given this context, I was disturbed to see another story about beheadings, which occurred this weekend, relegated to page 15 of the Australian newspaper. Does this mean that the shock of such actions has worn off or are we starting to accept the line pushed by the apologists that we, the West, are somehow to blame?

Neither of these is, in fact, the reason. Apathy and denial have characterised our response when Australia should be deeply disturbed by what happened this weekend. It did not take place in Iraq or the Middle East, nor did it involve a clash of Western military or commercial interests with other national interests. This atrocity involved three teenage Indonesian girls who were beheaded in an assault that marks an escalation of the violence against non-Muslims in Indonesia’s Central Sulawesi province.

The three high school students, who happened to be Christians, were found with their heads severed early Saturday and are believed to have been murdered while they walked to school. Two of the victims’ heads were found near a police post while the third was discovered outside a Christian church. These children were ruthlessly murdered because of one reason alone: intolerance. No amount of apologetics can link Western military action or global economic interests to these callous acts. These three girls were murdered because they dared to exercise a choice as to their faith. They are not alone.
An international watchdog monitoring religious persecution records that, as of February 2001, an estimated 8,000 people have been killed in violence resulting from the persecution of non-Muslims in Indonesia and at least 500,000 have been displaced. As of December 2000 it reports that as many as 5,000 Christians have been forced to undergo Muslim conversion rituals to convert to Islam. It further reports that those refusing to embrace the Islamic faith are often beheaded. Their heads are then paraded around the village to strike fear into the hearts of other non-Muslims.

Why should Australia be deeply disturbed? Not simply because of the brutality of the method of murder. British kings, French revolutionaries, the Chinese and Saudis have all used decapitation in the past, so none of us are in a position to criticise in this respect. The disturbing aspect of what is happening on a large scale in Indonesia and other parts of the world is the motive for these killings. The absence of tolerance and the absence of respect for life that these actions and the particular religious dogma behind them represent should cause each of us to reflect on what we hold dear. We should not allow this to remain on page 15 and we should continue to call for those responsible to be brought to account for their actions.

Scullin Electorate: Automotive Industry

Mr JENKINS (Scullin) (9.18 pm)—The announcement by Siemens VDO Automotive Australia that they are to construct their new office and manufacturing facility in my electorate was again a welcome and significant vote of confidence in Melbourne’s north. On 14 October the Premier turned the first sod to signify the start of the construction of the new facility. Premier Bracks spoke and Zoran Angelkovski, President and CEO of Siemens VDO Automotive Australia, and Josef Besting, Chairman of the Siemens VDO Automotive Supervisory Board for Australia, also spoke. Both speakers on behalf of Siemens VDO indicated their strong commitment to the automotive industry in Australia. They also indicated that the cooperation and the strategic alliance with the Victorian state government made their announcement to adopt the site in Bundoora on the former Janefield land possible. This is a significant investment in our local area—almost $25 million in constructing the new buildings and a further $70 million in capital equipment over the next six years. Siemens VDO already employ 350 people throughout Australia.

In his speech on the day, Zoran Angelkovski said the new facility will provide new employment opportunities for some 320 skilled workers on top of the existing employment base and that there will be benefits to local second tier suppliers with up to 1,200 additional indirect jobs created. This announcement and this action goes against the trend that we have seen in Melbourne’s north and west, as indicated by the member for Gellibrand in her contribution to this adjournment debate about the TCF industries in her seat. Often, I find—and some of the companies have also been automotive parts suppliers—they have followed what appears to be the trend and taken their production offshore. Siemens VDO will be producing automotive products such as electronic instrumentation, climate control systems and body control modules. The site will also house the distribution for their after-market products division, which produces in-car satellite navigation systems, audio instrumentation and sensors for the automotive and marine market systems. In his speech Josef Besting said:

For Siemens VDO in Germany, today’s announcement is proof that the Australian automotive market has a great future ahead of it ...

He went on to say:
... we know from our Australian customers—all part of global players—that they know about the value of their local manufacturing.

This was after the indication of how difficult it is for them to compete against other Asian sites. Zoran Angelkovski indicated that three out of four dollars being invested on new manufacturing plant in the Asian region are being invested in China. I congratulate Siemens VDO on this expression of their faith in the work force of the northern suburbs. It indicates that they acknowledge that in Victoria the state of the economy and the state of industrial relations allow them, as a global player, to make these decisions.

Finally, I express my clear delight at this decision because this represents a flagship development on the Janefield site. The Janefield site became available because of deinstitutionalisation during the Building Better Cities program. We had a frustrating history of inability to put in place investments on that site. First, the Urban and Regional Land Corporation had it for housing. It was then sold to RMIT, which had it zoned for the development of a major technology park. The 104-hectare site was then bought by the MAB Corporation, which have some expertise in similar developments in Camp Road, Broadmeadows and the new quays development at Docklands. I congratulate MAB Corporation and I congratulate the City of Whittlesea for being able to ease the planning problems that surround this size of development, because it is very encouraging that we see this development and future developments that will go on this site, as I said, breaking the trend of losing jobs from the area. With the 323 new jobs and the secondary jobs, this is an important boost to the local economy. I look forward to further announcements that add to this. (Time expired)

Fisher Electorate: Tourism

Mr SLIPPER (Fisher) (9.23 pm)—As many of my honourable colleagues would be aware, my electorate of Fisher on Queensland’s Sunshine Coast relies considerably on the tourism industry for its economic success. Many thousands of visitors from Brisbane and other Queensland areas, from interstate, and indeed from around the world travel to the Sunshine Coast to enjoy our great beaches, our warm, friendly atmosphere, our wonderful hospitality and our relaxed lifestyle. There are also a great number of significant tourist attractions, including UnderWater World at Mooloolaba, for example, that keeps the visitors entertained and captivated with quality displays.

More recently, on 31 July, a new tourist attraction was added to the list. The former Australian destroyer, HMAS Brisbane, was scuttled and sunk a few kilometres west of Mudjimba Island, not far from Point Cartwright, to be used as a dive wreck. Dive operators are already experiencing a very high demand for visits to the ex-HMAS Brisbane and between 10,000 and 15,000 scuba tourists are expected to visit the wreck annually. Two dive operators in my electorate are amongst those granted licences to take trips to the wreck. They are Mooloolaba based Sunreef Scuba Diving Services, owned by Greg Riddell and Paul White, and Scuba World, owned by Ian McKinnon.

Over the years of this project I was able to work closely with them and, despite some late hurdles and difficulties with the Queensland state government, the dream has now become a reality. Those tourists who visit the ex-HMAS Brisbane will all spend money in my region during their stay—at accommodation houses, restaurants and shops and on taxis and buses. The list goes on. In fact, the economic benefit to the economy will be an estimated $42 million. I am very proud that I
was able to set the ball rolling with this marvellous project when I was able to convince the former Minister for Defence, Peter Reith, that the naval destroyer, then decommissioned, should be gifted to the Queensland government and scuttled as a dive wreck not just off Queensland but off the Sunshine Coast. My focus for this project over the past four years has always been to ensure that the Sunshine Coast would be the major beneficiary of what will be a significant tourist attraction for hundreds of years. In fact, this ship served in two spheres of conflict but will serve as a dive wreck for some 500 years, boosting our tourist industry and also boosting fish stocks in our marine environment.

But such significant tourist attractions cannot be successful without the hard work of many behind the scenes. I congratulate Tourism Sunshine Coast for its tireless efforts in promoting the region and further building this important sector of our local economy. As a result of the work of Tourism Sunshine Coast, domestic and international visitor numbers to the Sunshine Coast rose strongly over this past year. Domestic visitors increased from 2,567,000 at June 2004 to 2,808,000 at June 2005—a quite remarkable increase of over nine per cent. International visitors increased from 229,889 at June 2004 to 248,275 at June 2005—an increase of about eight per cent, which is also truly remarkable. This represents an increase of some 18,386 international visitors alone who came to the region over the year—quite a significant increase and a notable achievement—and, of course, this will present a tremendous boost to our local economy. The number of visitors typically break down to show 34 per cent come from New Zealand, 23 per cent come from the United Kingdom and 17 per cent come from Europe.

I recently attended the Tourism Sunshine Coast’s 38th annual meeting and was privileged to hear first-hand of the good work that this organisation continues to do. My congratulations also go to the board members: the chairman, David Aaron; Leanne Coddington representing Tourism Queensland; Counsellor Mick Vernardos, the Mayor of Cooloola shire representing Cooloola Shire Council; Geoff Rickard and Boyd Williams representing the Noosa Community Tourism Board; Ferre De Deyne and David Thompson of Caloundra Tourism Inc; Bennie Pike and Noel Mooney of Maroochy Tourism Industry Advisory Board; John Atkin, deputy chairman, elected to the Leisure Marketing category; Steve Molnar, elected to the C&I category; David Foster, from the University of the Sunshine Coast, appointed by the board; and Bruce Swan of KPMG, appointed as honorary secretary. The board has been able to secure increased funding from major stakeholders this past year: up from $440,000 the previous year to $802,000 in 2004-05. We were also able to attract additional funding from the Australian government of $250,000 and this is a remarkable and positive step forward. (Time expired)

Australian Citizenship Quilt

Ms CORCORAN (Isaacs) (9.28 pm)—Upstairs in the public display area, Mr Speaker, you will find, if you wander up there, the Australian Citizenship Quilt. For the making of that quilt, entries were sought from all over Australia. I understand that many entries were received. Of course, not all of them were chosen for inclusion in the quilt, but one of the entries that was included was from Sue Hilton from my electorate. Sue was a newcomer to the art of quilting and was surprised and excited by the recognition she received. She had been doing quilting for only a couple of weeks when the entries were promoted, and her daughter said to her that she had better have a go. Sue did so, and she was very surprised and very pleased to be included. Mrs Hilton’s square features
many different coloured hands reaching out to one another and is about the different experiences and cultures that make up Australia and the way we live together. I put on record my congratulations to Sue Hilton.

Parliamentary Standards

Mr JENKINS (Scullin) (9.29 pm)—When elected to the prime ministership, the Prime Minister indicated his desire to raise parliamentary standards. I do not know whether the burden of office has diminished that desire, but today in question time I found it very disappointing, when the Leader of the Opposition asked whether the Prime Minister would debate certain matters of moment at the present, that the Prime Minister decided to answer by saying that he attends every question time. The real problem with question time is that it is not a debate. Questions cannot be in the form of debate but answers seemingly can. For the Prime Minister to mistake true debate with question time shows that he has some difficulty in understanding what proper parliamentary standards are.

The SPEAKER—Order! It being 9.30 pm, the debate is interrupted.

House adjourned at 9.30 pm

NOTICES

The following notices were given:

Mrs Moylan: To move: That this House:
(1) acknowledges the shared history and strong relationship between Australia and Singapore;
(2) strongly supports representations by the Prime Minister, the Hon. John Howard MP, to the Government of Singapore for clemency on behalf of Mr Nguyen Tuong Van, who was recently convicted and sentenced to death for drug trafficking by the Singapore Court;
(3) supports the representation by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, the Hon. Alexander Downer MP, the Leader of the Opposition, Mr Kevin Rudd MP, and Members and Senators of the Australian Parliament who have supported a plea for clemency as outlined above;
(4) expresses profound regret that the Prime Minister of Singapore, HE Mr Lee Hsien Loong, and his Cabinet has rejected the pleas for clemency;
(5) notes that although the Singapore Court has adhered to due process, there remains an option for the Prime Minister and Cabinet of Singapore to overturn the death sentence, replacing it with a prison sentence;
(6) acknowledges the severe social impact that drug trafficking and drug use has on communities around the world and respects the strong stance by Singapore in its policies to combat this illegal trade and its worst effects;
(7) re-affirms Australia’s opposition to capital punishment;
(8) believes that there are mitigating circumstances arising from this case that warrant consideration of clemency for Mr Nguyen;
(9) respectfully calls on the Singapore Prime Minister and Cabinet to reconsider the plea by the Australian Government for clemency in the case of Mr Nguyen Tuong Van; and
(10) asks the Singapore Government to overturn the death sentence imposed on Mr Nguyen and replace it with an appropriate prison term.

Mr Rudd: To move: That this House:
(1) condemns unequivocally the statements of the President of Iran calling for the destruction of Israel;
(2) welcomes the stated position of the United Nations Security Council admonishing the Iranian President’s statements and reminding all UN members to “refrain from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state”;
(3) reaffirms its support for a two-state solution to the Israel/Palestine question; and
(4) calls on all nations in the Middle East, not just Israel and Palestine, to engage in the Road Map to Peace.

Mr Byrne: To move:

That this House:

(1) notes the alarming and rapid increase in fuel prices in the South-eastern suburbs of Melbourne and across Australia;

(2) recognises the severe implications of exorbitant fuel prices for local businesses and family budgets;

(3) acknowledges residents’ concerns about reported instances of possible price gouging practises within the petroleum refining and distribution industry; and

(4) asks the Treasurer to direct the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission to formally monitor prices under Part V11A of the Trade Practices Act 1974.

Mr Windsor: To move:

That this House, while acknowledging that progress has been made in improving access to veterans’ entitlements:

(1) notes that anomalies remain in respect of eligibility for Gold Card benefits; and

(2) calls on the Government to introduce legislation as a matter of urgency to address remaining anomalies, and, in particular, to cover the extension of eligibility for Gold Card benefits to service personnel who were enlisted in the Australian defence forces during World War 2, but, while willing to serve overseas were either kept at home to perform their service in Australia, or, although selected for service overseas, because of injury or other misadventure, were not in fact sent to serve overseas.
QUESTIONS IN WRITING

Medicare
(Question No. 159)

Mr Murphy asked the Minister for Health and Ageing, in writing, on 18 November 2004:

(1) What sum did the Government spend on its Strengthening Medicare advertising program prior to the Federal Election (a) in total on all media, and (b) in Sydney on the electronic and print media.

(2) What sum was spent on this advertising campaign in the electoral division of Lowe and what are the details.

(3) Is he aware that during the last week of the 2004 Federal election campaign in the electoral division of Lowe the Liberal Party distributed a DL-sized information card titled MEDICARE in which the Liberal candidate claimed that "only the Liberals have improved and strengthened Medicare by increasing the rate of bulk-billing to 100%".

(4) What action is he taking to correct this misinformation and to inform the constituents of the electoral division of Lowe that Medicare bulk-billing rates have decreased under the Howard Government from approximately 80% to 70% nationally and that in the electorate of Lowe the rate of bulk-billing is approximately 91%.

Mr Abbott—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) (a) the cost of the Strengthening Medicare advertising campaign in all media was $15,994,135.
    (b) the cost of the Strengthening Medicare advertising campaign in Sydney on electronic and print media was $2,921,407.

(2) I am unable to provide an answer as it is not possible to break down the sum to the electorate level.

(3) I am unable to comment on the alleged statement/brochure.

(4) I am unable to comment on the alleged statement/brochure.

Caretaker Conventions
(Question No. 344)

Mr Melham asked the Prime Minister, in writing, on 7 December 2004:

(1) Did his department undertake a review of the Guidance on Caretaker Conventions issued in September 2001 and its application during the 2001 federal election campaign prior to the issue of the updated Guidance on Caretaker Conventions in July 2004; if so, what were the findings of the review.

(2) Which senior officers of his department were responsible for the provision of advice to Ministers, other departments and agencies concerning the application of the Guidance on Caretaker Conventions (issued in July 2004) during the 2004 federal election campaign.

(3) Did any (a) Ministers, (b) departments, and (c) agencies contact his department seeking advice concerning the application of the Guidance on Caretaker Conventions during the 2004 election campaign; if so, (i) what were the matters raised, and (ii) when did the consultation take place.

(4) Did his department become aware of any actions or practices by (a) Ministers, (b) departments, (c) agencies, and (d) any other developments, that were not consistent with the application of the Guidance on Caretaker Conventions during the 2004 election campaign; if so, in respect of each case, (i) which Ministers, departments or agencies were involved, (ii) what was the issue in question, (iii) when did the matter arise, and (iv) how was the issue resolved.
(5) Following the 2004 election, has his department undertaken a review of the implementation of the Guidance on Caretaker Conventions by Ministers, departments and agencies; if so, what are the findings of the review; if a review has not been undertaken or is not planned, why not.

Mr Howard—I am advised that the answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) Yes. A major review of the Guidance on Caretaker Conventions was undertaken before the 2001 election. In 2004 the Guidance was revised in a minor way to update information, and it was placed on the website of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet in July 2004.

(2) Ms Barbara Belcher, First Assistant Secretary, Government Division; Mr David Macgill, Assistant Secretary, Parliamentary and Government Branch; Mr Alex Anderson, Assistant Secretary, Legal and Culture Branch; and Dr Albin Smrdel, Senior Adviser, Legal Section.

(3) Departmental records indicate that approximately 400 requests for advice were received from various departments and agencies. This is similar to the number of requests for advice received in previous caretaker periods. The requests covered a wide range of issues and were made in the weeks preceding the dissolution of the House of Representatives and throughout the caretaker period.

(4) In line with past practice, the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet was asked to advise during the 2004 caretaker period whether actions or activities either being undertaken or contemplated complied or would comply with the Conventions. The department is not in a position to know if its advice is accepted in all cases, but the level of acceptance of both advice and the importance of the Conventions appears high.

(5) A preliminary review of the Guidance on Caretaker Conventions has been undertaken by the officials identified in the response to question 2 above and the views of departmental secretaries have been sought.

Royal Powers Act
(Question No. 347)

Mr Melham asked the Prime Minister, in writing, on 7 December 2004:

(1) Since March 1996, has The Queen of Australia, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, exercised any statutory power under the provisions of the Royal Powers Act 1953; if so, what power or powers did Her Majesty exercise and when did she do so.

(2) What purpose is now served by the retention of the Royal Powers Act 1953.

(3) Will the Act be subject to a parliamentary review with a view to its repeal.

Mr Howard—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) My department informs me that the answer is no.

(2) The retention of the Royal Powers Act 1953 ensures that The Queen’s ability to exercise statutory powers remains unaltered.

(3) There is no review anticipated at this time.

Cabinet Handbook
(Question No. 515)

Mr Melham asked the Prime Minister, in writing, on 8 February 2005:

(1) Is it the case that the Cabinet Handbook, Fifth Edition, March 2004, provides that a record is to be kept of persons who have had access to each Cabinet document.

(2) For each financial year since 1996-1997, how many times has his department been informed or become aware of the loss or disappearance of a Cabinet document created by his Government.
(3) For each instance of the known loss or disappearance of a Cabinet document, (a) when was the loss or disappearance of the document reported to his department, (b) did the document have a security classification in addition to the classification of “Cabinet-in-Confidence”; if so, at what level, (c) was the document subsequently located or otherwise accounted for, and (d) was the person responsible for the safe custody of the document (i) a Minister or Parliamentary Secretary, (ii) a Member of the staff of a Minister or Parliamentary Secretary, (iii) the Secretary of a Department or an equivalent head of a statutory authority, (iv) an SES officer in the Australian Public Service (APS) or an Officer of equivalent rank in the Australian Defence Force (ADF), or (v) an APS officer or ADF Member.

Mr Howard—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) Yes.

(2) I am advised that from time to time my Department, as custodian of Cabinet documents, does receive requests for replacement documents that have either been ‘mislaid’ or a hard copy inadvertently destroyed.

I am further advised that, when the ‘loss’ of a Cabinet document is reported to my Department, the opportunity is normally taken to issue a strong reminder about the need for proper care in the handling and safe-keeping of Cabinet records as set out in the Cabinet Handbook.

I am further advised that it has not been the practice of my Department to maintain a register of losses or disappearances of Cabinet documents reported by ministers’ offices or departments. Records in relation to any such reports are linked to the Cabinet document to which they relate.

I am not prepared to authorise the extensive effort and use of resources that would be required to find the details of the small number of cases covered by the honourable member’s question.

(3) See 2 above.

Cabinet Handbook
(Question No. 516)

Mr Melham asked the Prime Minister, in writing, on 8 February 2005:

(1) Is it the case that the Cabinet Handbook, Fifth Edition, March 2004, provides that once a Minister vacates office, hard copies of Cabinet documents held by the Minister must be destroyed according to the procedures set out in the Protective Security Manual and that in the case of submissions, memoranda, corrigenda and minutes, a record of each document destroyed (including the copy number) must be kept so that, if required, the holder can certify that destruction has occurred.

(2) Can he confirm that all persons who have vacated Ministerial office since March 1996 have ensured that all Cabinet documents held by them or their Office have been destroyed in accordance with the requirements of the Cabinet Handbook and the Protective Security Manual.

(3) As at (a) 16 November 2004, and (b) the present, which, if any, former Ministers of his Government had not destroyed all Cabinet documents held by them or their former Office.

Mr Howard—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) Yes.

(2) and (3) I am advised that, when a minister vacates office (as distinct from changing portfolio), my Department routinely notifies his or her office, both verbally and in writing, of their obligations in the handling of Cabinet documents, including a request that the minister confirm in writing that he or she no longer holds any Cabinet documents.

I am also advised that, more recently, the letter to the offices of vacating Ministers has been accompanied by a list of documents recorded on CABNET (ie. documents issued since CABNET was introduced in 1998) as being held by the Minister to assist them in their reconciliation process.
Cabinet Handbook
(Question No. 517)

Mr Melham asked the Prime Minister, in writing, on 8 February 2005:

(1) Is it the case that the Cabinet Handbook, Fifth Edition, March 2004, provides that Ministers must write to the Prime Minister seeking his or, at his discretion, Cabinet’s approval of significant Government appointments.

(2) For the financial year 2003-2004, how many appointments were brought to the Prime Minister’s attention which were for (a) significant full-time or part-time appointments to boards, commissions or statutory offices, (b) full-time Chief Executive Officer positions in government agencies, (c) first-time acting appointments in the above categories where the acting appointment is for three months or more, (d) appointments to significant non-statutory tribunals, advisory bodies and commissions of inquiry, (e) appointments as heads of missions other than Austrade managed posts, and (f) other significant appointments.

(3) For each category in (2), how many recommendations for appointments were (a) approved, and (b) not approved by (i) him, and (ii) Cabinet.

Mr Howard—I am advised that the answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) Yes

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(a)</td>
<td>644</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>608</td>
<td>nil</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b)</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>nil</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>nil</td>
<td>nil</td>
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<td>(c)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>nil</td>
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<td>(d)</td>
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<td>(f)</td>
<td>nil</td>
<td>nil</td>
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<td>nil</td>
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Caretaker Conventions
(Question No. 585)

Mr Kelvin Thomson asked the Prime Minister, in writing, on 15 February 2005:

(1) Is he aware of the conventions governing the caretaker period following the dissolution of the House of Representatives prior to an election.

(2) Is he aware than the Member for Indi announced the allocation of Regional Partnerships Programme project funding for two projects in her electorate during the caretaker period leading up to the 2004 election.

(3) Has the Member for Indi breached caretaker conventions by announcing Regional Partnerships Program project funding; if not, will he explain how the announcements of funding for a child care centre in Mt Beauty and a multi-purpose community centre at Wangaratta during the 2004 election campaign period do not breach the caretaker convention; is so, what does he propose to do about it.

Mr Howard—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) Yes.

(2) Yes.

(3) I am advised that the Wangaratta Community Resources and Learning Centre and the Mount Beauty Children’s Centre Project were approved prior to the start of the caretaker period and, therefore, there has not been a breach of caretaker conventions.
**Fuel Excise**  
*(Question No. 795)*

Mrs Irwin asked the Minister for Transport and Regional Services, in writing, on 14 March 2005:


2. What sum was returned to the States.

3. For the financial year (a) 2001-2002, (b) 2002-2003, and (c) 2003-2004, what sum did the Commonwealth spend (i) in total on road funding, (ii) on construction of the National Highway system, and (iii) on maintenance of the National Highway system.

Mr Truss—the answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

1. The amount of excise collected on petroleum other fuel products and crude oil for each of the years 2001-02 to 2003-04 is set out below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>$m</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2001-02</td>
<td>12,793</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002-03</td>
<td>13,337</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003-04</td>
<td>13,529</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Final Budget Outcome statements for 2001-02, 2002-03 and 2003-04

2. Excise collected is paid into Consolidated Revenue from which all Government programmes, including general revenue and special purpose grants to the States, are funded. There is no direct correlation between the amount of excise collected and grants paid to the States, however under the Australian Land Transport Development Act 1988 (the ALTD Act) a Special Account was established from which projects under that Act were funded. The Special Account was credited according to a charge rate determined by the Minister which was expressed as a proportion, in cents per litre, of the rate of excise on petrol and diesel fuels. The charge rate was calculated in arrears to equal the amount spent under the ALTD Act in each year. The Special Account provisions of the ALTD Act were repealed with effect from 28 July 2005.

The ALTD Act was not the source of all Australian Government road funding. For example, the Roads to Recovery programme and the financial assistance grants to local governments identified for roads were not funded under this Act.

3. The amount spent by the Commonwealth in each of the financial years 2001-02 to 2003-04 on (i) roads in total, (ii) National Highway construction projects; and (iii) National Highway maintenance is set out below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2001-02</th>
<th>2002-03</th>
<th>2003-04</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$m</td>
<td>$m</td>
<td>$m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Road Funding in total*</td>
<td>1,790</td>
<td>1,684</td>
<td>1,777</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Highway construction</td>
<td>501</td>
<td>466</td>
<td>399</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Highway maintenance</td>
<td>283</td>
<td>297</td>
<td>305</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


**Massage Service**  
*(Question No. 984)*

Mr Bowen asked the Treasurer, in writing, on 10 May 2005:
(1) Does any agency for which the Minister is responsible pay for massages for its staff; if so, what sum did each agency spend on this purpose in 2004.
(2) What was the cost per massage.
(3) How many staff made use of this service.

Mr Costello—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

**Australian Bureau of Statistics**
The Australian Bureau of Statistics is an independent agency in which the Australian Statistician has complete spending authority.
(1) $10,120 was spent by the ABS in 2004.
(2) The cost per massage was $15 for 15 minutes and $10 for 10 minutes.
(3) 50 ABS staff made use of this service.

**Australian Competition & Consumer Commission**
(1) to (3) Nil.

**Australian Office of Financial Management**
(1) to (3) Nil.

**Australian Prudential Regulation Authority**
(1) to (3) Nil.

**Australian Securities and Investments Commission**
The Australian Securities and Investments Commission is an independent agency in which the Chairman has complete spending authority.
(1) $6,920 was spent by ASIC in 2004.
(2) The cost per massage was $10.86.
(3) 637 ASIC staff made use of this service.

**Australian Taxation Office**
(1) to (3) Nil.

**Corporations and Markets Advisory Committee**
(1) to (3) Nil.

**Inspector-General of Taxation**
(1) to (3) Nil.

**National Competition Council**
(1) to (3) Nil.

**Productivity Commission**
(1) to (3) Nil.

**Treasury**
(1) to (3) Nil.

**Media Training**
(Question No. 1058)

Mr Bowen asked the Minister representing the Minister for the Environment and Heritage, in writing, on 10 May 2005:
(1) Did the department or any agency under the Minister’s portfolio engage the services of a media training company in 2004; if so, how many individuals (by agency/department) received media training.

(2) Did the Minister personally receive any media training.

(3) What was the cost of the media training.

(4) What was the name and postal address of each company engaged to provide media training.

Mr Truss—The Minister for the Environment and Heritage has provided the following answer to the honourable member’s question:

(1) Yes, 24 staff from the Department’s Parks Australia Division received media training in 2004.

(2) No.

(3) The media training in (1) was provided at a cost of $10,373.44

(4) Ken Begg and Associates, Brindabella Business Park, Canberra Airport 2609.

Governor-General: Correspondence

(Question No. 1182)

Mr Melham asked the Prime Minister, in writing, on 10 May 2005:

Further to the answer to question No. 148 (Hansard, 17 February 2005, page 106), why is correspondence between Australia’s Head of State, Her Royal Highness Queen Elizabeth II, and her constitutional representative in Australia, the Governor-General, solely of “a private and personal nature”.

Mr Howard—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

By longstanding practice and convention, and consistent with the treatment of such records by the National Archives of Australia, correspondence between the Governor-General and The Queen not emanating from advice from the Prime Minister is regarded as personal and private.

Governor-General

(Question No. 1186)

Mr Melham asked the Prime Minister, in writing, on 10 May 2005:

Does the Governor-General receive regular oral or written briefings on (a) intelligence, (b) security and (c) counter-terrorism issues by the (i) Office of National Assessments and (ii) Australian Security Intelligence Organisation.

Mr Howard—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

I am advised that the Governor-General does not receive regular oral or written briefings on (a) intelligence, (b) security and (c) counter-terrorism issues by the (i) Office of National Assessments (ONA) or (ii) Australian Security Intelligence Organisation. I am advised that, where appropriate, ONA provides to the Governor-General written ONA assessments on a range of strategic, economic and counter-terrorism issues.

Governor-General

(Question No. 1192)

Mr Melham asked the Prime Minister, in writing, on 10 May 2005:

(1) Is it the Government’s view that the Governor-General may seek independent advice on legal and constitutional issues from any person other than himself and/or the Attorney-General.

(2) Is it permissible for the Governor-General to obtain advice on legal or constitutional issues from the Chief Justice of the High Court of Australia.
Mr Howard—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) and (2) Generally, the Governor-General performs constitutional and statutory duties in accordance with the advice of Australian Government ministers (including the Prime Minister and the Attorney-General where appropriate). This is required by the principle of responsible government which underpins Australia’s constitutional arrangements. In exceptional constitutional circumstances, where the Governor-General is not required to act in accordance with ministerial advice, the Governor-General exercises ‘reserve’ powers which are governed by constitutional conventions.

The question of the advice that may be available to the Governor-General in relation to any particular exercise of power could not properly be addressed without regard to all of the surrounding circumstances. It is not appropriate for me to provide speculative answers to hypothetical questions about sources of advice that may be available to the Governor-General.

Governor-General
(Question No. 1194)

Mr Melham asked the Prime Minister, in writing, on 10 May 2005:

(1) What sum was spent by the Commonwealth Government on (a) travel, (b) accommodation, and (c) other expenses (including meals and incidentals) incurred on the visit of the Governor-General and Mrs Jeffery to the United Kingdom and Singapore between 29 February and 11 March 2004.

(2) What are the details of the accommodation used by the Governor-General and Mrs Jeffery on this journey.

(3) Who accompanied Their Excellencies on this journey overseas.

Mr Howard—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

The Official Secretary to the Governor-General has provided the following information:

(1) (a) $90,653 (b) $35,529 (c) $4,085 (Note: meal costs are included with accommodation costs; air travel Canberra-Sydney-Canberra was undertaken using VIP aircraft paid by the Department of Defence; the costs include only expenses of Their Excellencies, Official Secretary and other Government House staff and doctor.)

(2) Berkeley Hotel, London (1-3 March 2004), Raffles Hotel in Singapore (7-10 March 2004).

(3) Official Secretary, personal staff (2), doctor, Federal Agents (2), Assistant Secretary, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Singapore only).

Governor-General
(Question No. 1196)

Mr Melham asked the Prime Minister, in writing, on 10 May 2005:

(1) What sum was spent by the Commonwealth Government on (a) travel, (b) accommodation, and (c) other expenses (including meals and incidentals) incurred when the Governor-General and Mrs Jeffery attended the state funeral of the former President of the United States, Mr Ronald Reagan, in Washington on 11 June 2004.

(2) What were the details of the accommodation used by the Governor-General and Mrs Jeffery on this journey.

(3) Who accompanied Their Excellencies on this journey overseas.

Mr Howard—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

The Official Secretary to the Governor-General has provided the following information:

(1) (a) $41,645; (b) $15,087; (c) $484 Note: Her Excellency, Mrs Jeffery did not travel with the Governor-General on this overseas visit; meal costs are included with accommodation costs; air
travel Canberra-Sydney-Canberra was undertaken using VIP aircraft paid by the Department of Defence; the costs include only expenses of the Governor-General and his staff.

(2) Intercontinental Hotel, Washington (10-14/6/2004).
(3) Official Secretary, personal staff (1), Federal Agents (2).

Queen’s Personal Honours
(Question No. 1255)

Mr Melham asked the Prime Minister, in writing, on 11 May 2005:

(1) Since March 1996, on how many occasions has Her Majesty the Queen of Australia honoured Australian citizens with awards in Her personal Order or other honours which are within Her Majesty’s own gift.
(2) What awards or honours were involved.
(3) In presenting honours or awards that are within Her Majesty’s own gift, does the Queen consult with or seek the concurrence of the Prime Minister of Australia in respect of Australian recipients.

Mr Howard—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) and (2) The records relating to awards within Her Majesty’s own gift are maintained by the Central Chancery of Knighthoods, London.
(3) It has been longstanding practice for Her Majesty The Queen to bestow honours and awards within her personal gift independent of ministerial recommendation. Her Majesty The Queen may consult the government in regard to significant appointments.

Governor-General
(Question No. 1268)

Mr Melham asked the Prime Minister, in writing, on 11 May 2005:

What was the purpose of the Governor-General’s discussions on 24 August 2004 with Mr Andrew Metcalfe, Deputy Secretary, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet; Lieutenant Colonel Gus Gilmore, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet; Mr Ed Tyrie, PSM APM, Executive Director, Attorney-General’s Department; Mr Mika Kontianinen, Assistant Secretary, Attorney-General’s Department and Mr Corey Bacon, Attorney-General’s Department.

Mr Howard—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

I am advised by the Official Secretary to the Governor-General that the Governor-General meets with a large number of people from a broad range of backgrounds and discusses a wide variety of topics with them. The content of those discussions is a matter between the Governor-General and the individuals concerned.

Consultancy Services
(Question No. 1275)

Mr Bowen asked the Prime Minister, in writing, on 11 May 2005:

(1) Is he aware that his department has engaged Swell Design as a consultant on new government branding.
(2) What work did Swell Design conduct as part of this contract.
(3) Can he confirm that $165,000 was spent on this consultancy.
(4) Have any other consultants been engaged in this process; if so, what are their names and postal addresses.
(5) What sum was spent on each consultancy.
Mr Howard—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) Yes.
(2) Graphic design services to assist with both the development of the Design Guidelines for the Australian Government Branding and the provision of new logos for each department and agency on a CD.
(3) No, the cost of the consultancy was $159,231.
(4) No.
(5) Not applicable.

Media Monitoring and Clipping Services
(Question No. 1288)

Mr Bowen asked the Minister for Education, Science and Training, in writing, on 11 May 2005:

(1) What sum was spent on media monitoring and clipping services engaged by the Minister’s office in (a) 2002-2003, (b) 2003-2004, and (c) 2004-2005 to date.
(2) What was the name and postal addresses of each media monitoring company engaged by the Minister’s office.

Dr Nelson—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) (a) $32,696.48 in 2002-2003; (b) $57,806.34 in 2003-2004; (c) $37,530.39 in 2004-2005. All figures are GST exclusive.
(2) The name and postal address of each media monitoring company engaged by the Minister’s office is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company Name</th>
<th>Postal Address</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AAP Information Services Pty Ltd</td>
<td>9 Lang Street SYDNEY NSW 1220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department of the Parliamentary Reporting Staff</td>
<td>Parliament House CANBERRA ACT 2600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media Monitors Australia Pty Ltd</td>
<td>PO Box 2110 STRAWBERRY HILLS NSW 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rehame Australia Monitoring Service Pty Ltd</td>
<td>PO Box 537 PORT MELBOURNE VIC 3207</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Press Club</td>
<td>PO Box E244 KINGSTON ACT 2604</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Media Monitoring and Clipping Services
(Question No. 1313)

Mr Bowen asked the Minister for Education, Science and Training, in writing, on 11 May 2005:

(1) What sum was spent on media monitoring and clipping services engaged by the department and agencies in the Minister’s portfolio in (a) 2002-2003, (b) 2003-2004, and (c) 2004-2005 to date.
(2) Did the department or any agency in the Minister’s portfolio order newspaper clippings, television appearance transcripts or videos, radio transcripts or tapes on behalf of the Minister’s office in (a) 2004 and (b) 2005; if so, what sum was spent by the department or agency on providing this service.
Dr Nelson—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) The total amounts (including those reported in Parliamentary Question 1288 [for the Minister’s Office], and also including Questacon from 2003-2004 when it became part of the Department), spent on media monitoring and clipping services engaged by the Department are outlined below. Figures are GST exclusive and rounded to the nearest dollar.

(a) 2002-2003 $210,653
(b) 2003-2004 $202,554
(c) 2004-2005 $199,809

The sums spent on media monitoring and clipping services engaged by agencies in the Minister’s portfolio were:

Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS)

(a) 2002-2003 $27,079
(b) 2003-2004 $15,732
(c) 2004-2005 $16,520

Australian Institute of Marine Science (AIMS)

(a) 2002-2003 $16,043
(b) 2003-2004 $13,872
(c) 2004-2005 $12,229

Australian Research Council (ARC)

(a) 2002-2003 $17,048
(b) 2003-2004 $22,585
(c) 2004-2005 $19,715

Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation (ANSTO)

(a) 2002-2003 $74,529
(b) 2003-2004 $43,540
(c) 2004-2005 $29,130

Australian National Training Authority (ANTA)

(a) 2002-2003 $17,458
(b) 2003-2004 $19,575
(c) 2004-2005 $24,139

Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO)

(a) 2002-2003 $73,589
(b) 2003-2004 $94,501
(c) 2004-2005 $69,864

(2) (a) The Minister’s Office orders its own newspaper clippings, television appearance transcripts and videos, radio transcripts and tapes. Refer to response to House of Representatives Question No 1288. (b) Refer to response to House of Representatives Question No 1288.

Media and Communications Officers

(Question No. 1419)

Mr Bowen asked the Prime Minister, in writing, on 24 May 2005:
(1) How many media and communications officers are employed in the Minister’s department.

(2) How many media and communications officers were employed in the Minister’s department in 1996.

(3) What sum was allocated to the media and communications unit in (a) 1996-1997, (b) 2004-2005, and (c) 2005-2006.

Mr Howard—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

I am advised that:

(1) There was one media and communications officer employed in the department within the APEC Task Force in 2004/05. There will be nine media and communications officers employed in the department within the media and communications unit of the APEC Task Force for 2005/06. Five officers will be employed for the full twelve months, one for seven months, one for six months and one for four months. This does not include the staff of the Government Communications Unit (GCU) which is located within the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet. The GCU is responsible for facilitating communications campaigns across Departments and Financial Management and Accountability Act 1997 agencies.

(2) The information is not readily available.

(3) (a) Records not held (b) $32,081 (allocated to APEC Task Force part year) and (c) $1,046,666 (allocated to APEC Task Force for a full year).

Media and Communications Officers
(Question No. 1428)

Mr Bowen asked the Minister representing the Minister for Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs, in writing, on 24 May 2005:

(1) How many media and communications officers are employed in the Minister’s department.

(2) How many media and communications officers were employed in the Minister’s department in 1996.

(3) What sum was allocated to the media and communications unit in (a) 1996-1997, (b) 2004-2005, and (c) 2005-2006.

Mr John Cobb—The Minister for Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs has provided the following answer to the honourable member’s question:

(1) Nineteen Public Affairs Officers are employed in the Department.

(2) Seventeen Public Affairs Officers were employed at 30 June 1996.

(3) (a) This sum is unavailable due to a change in systems. (b) Costs for 2004-05 were $3,846,952.84. (c) $4,044,680.23 has been allocated for 2005-06.

Media and Communications Officers
(Question No. 1434)

Mr Bowen asked the Minister representing the Minister for the Environment and Heritage, in writing, on 24 May 2005:

(1) How many media and communications officers are employed in the Minister’s department.

(2) How many media and communications officers were employed in the Minister’s department in 1996.

(3) What sum was allocated to the media and communications unit in (a) 1996-1997, (b) 2004-2005, and (c) 2005-2006.
Mr Truss—The Minister for the Environment and Heritage has provided the following answer to the honourable member’s question:

(1) 22. This figure reflects the integration of the Australian Greenhouse Office and the Heritage Division public affairs officers into a central public affairs team.

(2) 10. This figure does not include public affairs officers employed by the above agencies. Including the Australian Heritage Commission, which is now integrated into the Department of the Environment and Heritage, the number was 15. The Australian Greenhouse Office, which was established after 1996-97, employed another five public affairs officers.

(3) (a) Not available (b) $1,809,307.57 (c) $2,436,164.95.

Pingat Jasa Malaysia Medal
(Question No. 1437)

Mr Edwards asked the Minister Assisting the Minister for Defence, in writing, on 24 May 2005:

(1) Can she confirm that the Australian Directorate of Honours and Awards has accepted the dates for qualifying for the Pingat Jasa Malaysia Medal (PJM) as the period between 31 August 1957 to 31 December 1966.

(2) Is she aware of the high level of disquiet within the veteran community over the end date of 31 December 1966 and can she say what consultation took place with the veteran community over this date.

(3) Can she confirm that the (a) Malaya emergency occurred between 1948 and 1960, (b) Borneo/Indonesian Confrontation occurred between 1962 and 1966, (c) Far East Strategic Reserve operated between 1955 and 1971, and (d) South East Asian Service operated between 1960 and 1975.

(4) Are the dates for qualifying based on operational service; if not, why do they not include the whole period that Australian forces were deployed in the defence of Malaysia from 1957 to 1975.

(5) Can she explain why she accepted a set of qualifying criteria that has caused division within the veteran community.

(6) Will she review the qualifying criteria for the PJM and consult with the relevant Ex-Service Organisations to ensure no new anomalies are created.

(7) In the event that anomalies are identified with these dates, will she seek a review of the criteria with the relevant Malaysian authorities.

Mrs De-Anne Kelly—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) No. The Australian Government accepted the offer of the medal under the conditions established by the Malaysian Government. This included the qualifying dates for the PJM as the period between 31 August 1957 to 31 December 1966.

(2) Yes. None. The Malaysian Government established the end date of 31 December 1966 for eligibility to the PJM.

(3) (a), (b), (c) and (d) Yes.

(4) The dates have been set by the Malaysian Government under its own statutes without relating specifically to operational service as defined by the Australian Defence Force.

(5) The Australian Government accepted the offer of the medal under the qualifying criteria determined by the Malaysian Government.

(6) No.

(7) No.
Governor-General  
(Question No. 1444)  
Mr Melham asked the Prime Minister, in writing, on 25 May 2005:
What was the purpose of the Governor-General’s meeting with the Special Operations Commander Australia, Major General Mike Hindmarsh, AM, CSC, at Government House, Canberra, on 20 May 2005.

Mr Howard—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:
I am advised by the Official Secretary to the Governor-General that the Governor-General, in the course of his busy schedule, meets a large number of people from a broad range of backgrounds and discusses a wide variety of topics with them. The content of those discussions is a matter between the Governor-General and the individuals concerned.

Prime Minister: Electoral Visits  
(Question No. 1449)  
Mr Hayes asked the Prime Minister, in writing, on 25 May 2005:
(1) How many times has he visited the electoral division of (a) Werriwa, (b) Fowler, (c) Hughes and (d) Macarthur from 1996 to 2004.
(2) What was the timing and purpose of each visit.

Mr Howard—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:
(1) and (2) The Prime Minister regularly visits many different regions, cities, towns and suburbs throughout the nation and has done so since his election in 1996.
Those visits receive local press coverage.
The honourable member is referred to easily available public sources such as local community and Sydney wide media.

Prime Minister and Cabinet: Grants  
(Question No. 1468)  
Mr Bowen asked the Prime Minister, in writing, on 25 May 2005:
(1) Has the Minister’s department or any agency in the Minister’s portfolio made any grants for any purpose to the national or state or territory branches of (a) the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, (b) the Australian Industry Group, (c) the National Farmers Federation, (d) the Business Council of Australia, (e) the Motor Traders Association of Australia, (f) Employers First, (g) Australian Business Limited, (h) the National Retailers Association, (i) the Australian Liquor Association, (j) the National Electrical Contractors Association, (k) the State Chamber of Commerce (NSW), and (l) the Housing Industry Association in (i) 2003-2004, (ii) 2004-2005, and (iii) 2005-2006.
(2) What the purpose and amount of each grant and on what date was each grant awarded.

Mr Howard—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:
I have been advised that the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet has not provided grants to the industry bodies identified in the member’s question.

Education, Science and Training: Grants  
(Question No. 1479)  
Mr Bowen asked the Minister for Education, Science and Training, in writing, on 25 May 2005:
(1) Has the Minister’s department or any agency in the Minister’s portfolio made any grants for any purpose to the national or state or territory branches of:
   (a) the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry;
   (b) the Australian Industry Group;
   (c) the National Farmers Federation;
   (d) the Business Council of Australia;
   (e) the Motor Traders Association of Australia;
   (f) Employers First;
   (g) Australian Business Limited;
   (h) the National Retailers Association;
   (i) the Australian Liquor Association;
   (j) the National Electrical Contractors Association;
   (k) the State Chamber of Commerce (NSW); and
   (l) the Housing Industry Association in:
      (i) 2003-2004;
      (ii) 2004-2005; and
      (iii) 2005-2006.

(2) What the purpose and amount of each grant and on what date was each grant awarded.

Dr Nelson—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:
Attachment A is a list of grant payments made to the relevant organisations for 2003-04 and 2004-05. At the time of preparing this answer no grant payments had been made for 2005-06.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Amount (GST Exclusive) $</th>
<th>Payments in 2003-04 $</th>
<th>Payments in 2004-05 $</th>
<th>Date Grant Awarded</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>151,000.00</td>
<td>72,000.00</td>
<td>79,000.00</td>
<td>1/10/2002</td>
<td>To engage employers in providing better school to work transitions for young people, including raising the awareness of VET in Schools programmes and School-based New Apprenticeships.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>738,409.09</td>
<td>738,409.09</td>
<td>1/7/2000</td>
<td>The Industry Training Strategies Programme supports ACCI, and other industry peak bodies, to provide Education and Training advice to its membership.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>109,090.91</td>
<td>63,636.36</td>
<td>45,454.55</td>
<td>21/12/2001</td>
<td>Building &amp; Construction Taskforce involvement in the National Industry Skills initiative through the implementation of the Building Brighter Futures Industry Skills Action Pack Task Force.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9,090.91</td>
<td>9,090.91</td>
<td>16/9/2002</td>
<td>To support industry and project specific activities to address skills shortages, including regional projects. To cost and design an Industry Placement Programme for careers teachers. Industry research will underpin development and strategies to address industry skills needs.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

QUESTIONS IN WRITING
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Amount (GST Exclusive) $</th>
<th>Payments in 2003-04 $</th>
<th>Payments in 2004-05 $</th>
<th>Date Grant Awarded</th>
<th>Date Grant Awarded</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To engage employers in providing better school to work transitions for young people, including raising the awareness of VET in Schools programmes and School-based New Apprenticeships.</td>
<td>265,750.00</td>
<td>130,500.00</td>
<td>135,250.00</td>
<td>1/10/2002</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To research and consult on strategies to enhance industry access to suitably qualified staff in the plastics and chemicals industries.</td>
<td>34,090.91</td>
<td>18,181.82</td>
<td>15,909.09</td>
<td>25/5/2004</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To work in the Townsville region, ACCI member organisations, relevant government agencies, training bodies, Job Network providers and other organisations, to research and document the region’s industries, their skills needs, related data and resources.</td>
<td>37,000.00</td>
<td>37,000.00</td>
<td>37,000.00</td>
<td>11/6/2004</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To develop enhancements to the ‘Big Plans’ website and promote the site to industry.</td>
<td>29,000.00</td>
<td>29,000.00</td>
<td>29,000.00</td>
<td>11/6/2004</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To undertake a national review of training pathways in the building and construction industry.</td>
<td>90,909.09</td>
<td>90,909.09</td>
<td>90,909.09</td>
<td>30/6/2004</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Industry Training Strategies Programme supports ACCI, and other industry peak bodies, to provide Education and Training advice to its membership.</td>
<td>863,109.10</td>
<td>863,109.10</td>
<td>863,109.10</td>
<td>9/7/2004</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implementation projects arising from the National Industry Skills Initiative Retail Industry Working Group Report and the Retail Industry Action Plan. Employee demographics and industry use of the training system.</td>
<td>220,000.00</td>
<td>220,000.00</td>
<td>220,000.00</td>
<td>15/7/2004</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To support industry and project specific activities to address skills shortages, including regional projects. To cost and design an Industry Placement Programme for careers teachers. Industry research will underpin development and strategies to address industry skills needs.</td>
<td>127,500.00</td>
<td>127,500.00</td>
<td>127,500.00</td>
<td>15/7/2004</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To look at the skills needs for the non-cooking occupations in the accommodation, café and restaurant sector in the hospitality industry to implement practical projects that will deal with these skills needs, difficulties and shortages.</td>
<td>220,000.00</td>
<td>220,000.00</td>
<td>220,000.00</td>
<td>12/8/2004</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amount (GST Exclusive) $</td>
<td>Payments in 2003-04 $</td>
<td>Payments in 2004-05 $</td>
<td>Date Grant Awarded</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>102,150.00</td>
<td>102,150.00</td>
<td>102,150.00</td>
<td>5/10/2004</td>
<td>Investigating links between electro-technology and data communications, skills shortages, licensing, the ageing workforce and industry information: analysis of issues &amp; development of solutions.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>602,269.03</td>
<td>602,269.03</td>
<td></td>
<td>1/7/2000</td>
<td>The Industry Training Strategies Programme supports AiG and other industry peak bodies, to provide Education and Training advice to its membership.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60,727.27</td>
<td>60,727.27</td>
<td></td>
<td>13/5/2003</td>
<td>Development of an interactive multimedia CD rom promoting careers in the aerospace industry.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>353,100.00</td>
<td>216,000.00</td>
<td>137,100.00</td>
<td>1/7/2003</td>
<td>To engage employers in providing better school to work transitions for young people, including raising the awareness of VET in Schools programmes and School-based New Apprenticeships.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>263,700.00</td>
<td>223,700.00</td>
<td>40,000.00</td>
<td>30/10/2003</td>
<td>The development of a boating industry Working Group Report and Action Plan that details strategies to address the identified skills needs.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10,000.00</td>
<td>10,000.00</td>
<td></td>
<td>30/10/2003</td>
<td>National Industry Skills Initiative Report Reprint.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65,037.40</td>
<td>65,037.40</td>
<td></td>
<td>6/7/2004</td>
<td>To develop an “Adopt-a-School” toolbox for use by Local Community Partnerships, industry, employers and schools across Australia.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90,909.09</td>
<td>90,909.09</td>
<td></td>
<td>6/7/2004</td>
<td>To investigate and identify skills and competencies required to work with emerging technologies and include them in identified national Training Packages. The focus of the project will be on nanotechnology and photonics-related skills.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>675,319.76</td>
<td>675,319.76</td>
<td></td>
<td>6/7/2004</td>
<td>The Industry Training Strategies Programme supports AiG and other industry peak bodies, to provide Education and Training advice to its membership.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>295,800.00</td>
<td>295,800.00</td>
<td></td>
<td>28/7/2004</td>
<td>To revise the original engineering ZOOM CD Rom, update the operating platform and including 10 additional engineering industry sectors to the product.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>218,181.81</td>
<td>218,181.81</td>
<td></td>
<td>24/10/2004</td>
<td>To coordinate a collaborative “whole of strategy” approach to resolving skill shortage issues within the Hunter and Illawarra regions.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Department operates the Departmental Research Programme (DRP) which enables research activities that are aligned with the Department’s research priorities to be undertaken. These priorities are identified in the DEST Triennial Research Plan. The contractor is committed to helping achieve the Programme, through conducting of the project called “A World Class Training System for World Class Industries”. Through the project the contractor is required to analyse the current state of skilling in the manufacturing industry, create a comprehensive profile of the future skill needs of the manufacturing industry, and provide a report of strategies to ensure that future skill needs are met.

To engage employers in providing better school to work transitions for young people, including raising the awareness of VET in Schools programmes and School-based New Apprenticeships.

A Southbank Enterprise Based Teacher will be placed to work with HIA for 2 days per week for 40 weeks. The project will provide language, literacy and numeracy support for HIA employees and members (in particular large and small building contractors, trade contractors and their respective employees), engaged in upskilling, mandatory WH&S and licensing training as well as small business skills. NESB employees in specific industry sectors (eg glazing and plastering) are another target group.

**Governor-General: Continuity of Government Plans**

(Question No. 1509)

Mr Melham asked the Prime Minister, in writing, on 26 May 2005:

(1) Further to the answer to question No. 154 (*Hansard*, 14 March 2005, page 106), when was the Governor-General briefed in relation to Continuity of Government Plans.

(2) In view of their potential responsibility as an Administrator of the Commonwealth or as a Deputy to the Governor-General, has the (a) Governor of Western Australia, (b) Governor of Victoria, and (c) Governor of New South Wales been briefed on Commonwealth Continuity of Government Plans; if so, when; if not, why not.

5,914,753.42  2,221,059.93  3,693,693.49
Mr Howard—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) I am advised that the Governor-General was briefed on 24 August 2004.

(2) (a) No. (b) No. (c) No. The Office of the Official Secretary to the Governor-General has been briefed on the arrangements which continue to be developed. That Office would provide support to an Administrator or Deputy should the arrangements be activated at a time when an Administrator had assumed the role or a Deputy was undertaking an allocated task.

Howard Government: Continuity of Government Plans
(Question No. 1510)

Mr Melham asked the Prime Minister, in writing, on 26 May 2005:

Further to the answer to question No. 153 (Hansard, 17 February 2005, page 106), when did the Government (a) commence to develop and (b) approve Continuity of Government plans.

Mr Howard—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(a) I am advised that there were some pre-existing arrangements to provide for the security of key government office holders and that work on drawing these arrangements together into a more comprehensive set of plans began in mid 2003.

(b) August 2004.

Overseas Travel
(Question No. 1597)

Mr Bowen asked the Prime Minister, in writing, on 31 May 2005:

In respect of his travel to New Zealand on 6 April 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.

Mr Howard—I am advised that the answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(a) The total cost of travel and accommodation for me and my party was $21,835.71.

(b) (i) The total sum spent on airline travel (RAAF and commercial) was $18,228.75.

(ii) The sum spent on airline travel for the one member of my personal staff who travelled in advance by commercial aircraft was $1,163.60.

(c) I was accompanied by five members of my personal staff.

(d) Business class was the class of travel used by (i) my personal staff and (ii) departmental staff.

(e) The New Zealand Government provided ground transport for the visit.

(f) A combination of cars and mini vans was used for ground transport.

(g) One suite and five rooms were booked for me and my personal staff. The New Zealand Government covered the cost of the suite and one of the rooms.

(h) The standard of hotel room booked was (i) a suite for me and (ii) standard rooms for my personal staff.

Pingat Jasa Malaysia Medal
(Question No. 1667)
Mr Edwards asked the Minister Assisting the Minister for Defence, in writing, on 14 June 2005:

(1) Has she been requested by the Far East Strategic Reserve Association of Australia to intervene on behalf of its members in an effort to resolve problems of inequity experienced by Royal Australian Navy personnel in relation to the issue of the Pingat Jasa Malaysia Award.

(2) What are the criteria for the Pingat Jasa Malaysia Award.

(3) Were the Award criteria decided by the Australian Directorate of Honours and Awards; if not, who decided on the Award and which ex-service organisations were consulted on the criteria for the award.

(4) Was the Far East Strategic Reserve Association consulted on the Award.

(5) Is it her intention to cause the Award criteria to be reviewed or does she endorse the current Award criteria.

(6) Has she held discussions with Malaysian authorities regarding the Award criteria; if so, what was the result of the discussions.

(7) How many (a) Army, (b) Navy, and (c) Airforce personnel are recipients of the Award.

Mrs De-Anne Kelly—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) Yes.

(2) The Malaysian Government set the basic criteria for the awarding of the Award. The eligibility criteria are as follows:

(a) Australian Defence Force members who served in the prescribed operational area of Malaysia and Singapore, on the posted strength of a unit or formation, or in direct support of operations in Malaysia for 90 days or more, in the aggregate, as follows:

   (i) Malaysia during the period 31 August 1957 and 31 December 1966 inclusive; and

   (ii) Singapore during the period 31 August 1957 and 9 August 1965 inclusive.

   Qualifying service between 12 August 1966 and 31 December 1966 may only apply if a member was posted for operations in Malaysia on or before 12 August 1966.

   Malay Peninsula and the Island of Singapore extending to 12 nautical miles seaward from the coast of these areas.

(b) Australian Defence Force members who were posted to the strength of a unit or formation outside the prescribed operational area but served in a secondary role in indirect support of operations in Malaysia for 180 days or more, in the aggregate, during the period 31 August 1957 and 31 December 1966 inclusive.

   The secondary role is seagoing service with HMA Ships patrolling outside of the operational area whilst allotted to the Commonwealth Far East Strategic Reserve.

(3) No. The Malaysian Government established the eligibility criteria under its own statutes and no ex-Service organisations were consulted.

(4) No.

(5) No. The Australian Government accepted the offer of the Award under the qualifying criteria determined by the Malaysian Government.

(6) No.

(7) (a), (b) and (c) None. The Malaysian Government will issue the Awards in due course.

Government House: Industrial Action

(Question No. 1681)
Mr Melham asked the Prime Minister, in writing, on 15 June 2005:

(1) Is he aware of any industrial action taken or proposed by employees working at Government House, Canberra; if so, what was the nature of the industrial action taken and what is the nature of the dispute that has given rise to it.

(2) What measures has the Official Secretary to the Governor-General taken to resolve this matter.

(3) Have staff at Government House or union representatives called on the Governor-General, His Excellency Major General Michael Jeffery, to intervene in this matter; if so, what was the Governor-General’s response.

Mr Howard—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

I am advised by the Official Secretary to the Governor-General that:

(1) No industrial action within the meaning of that term in the Workplace Relations Act 1986 has been taken by employees at Government House or has been proposed. However, media reports in June 2005 indicated that some employees at Government House did not agree with certain proposals being considered in the context of the renegotiation of the Certified Agreement for the staff of the Office of the Official Secretary.

(2) Following discussions and consultation with staff and their representatives, an agreed position has been reached for a Certified Agreement for the staff of the Office of the Official Secretary to the Governor-General for the period 2005-2008. The Agreement was certified on 15 September 2005.

(3) The trade union with coverage of Government House employees, the Community and Public Sector Union, was reported in the press as calling for the Governor-General to become involved in the negotiation of the Certified Agreement. The Governor-General did not intervene in the matter as responsibility for employment matters at Government House rests with the Official Secretary to the Governor-General, not with the Governor-General.

Governor-General
(Question No. 1682)

Mr Melham asked the Prime Minister, in writing, on 15 June 2005:

For what purpose did the Governor-General, His Excellency Major General Michael Jeffery meet Dr David Solomon at Government House, Canberra, on Tuesday, 7 June 2005.

Mr Howard—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

I am advised by the Official Secretary to the Governor-General that the Governor-General meets a large number of people from a broad range of backgrounds and discusses a wide variety of topics with them. The content of those discussions is a matter between the Governor-General and the individuals concerned.

Governor-General
(Question No. 1683)

Mr Melham asked the Prime Minister, in writing, on 15 June 2005:

On what day was the Governor-General’s press release concerning his visit to Moscow posted on the Governor-General’s website.

Mr Howard—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

I am advised by the Official Secretary to the Governor-General that it was released on 29 April 2005 via the Canberra Press Gallery boxes and was posted on the website on 26 May 2005.

Advertising Agencies
(Question No. 1792)
Mr Bowen asked the Attorney-General, in writing, on 23 June 2005:

(1) Will the Minister provide a list of advertising agencies which are used by the department and the agencies in the Minister’s portfolio.

(2) What sum was paid to each advertising agency used by the department and agencies in the Minister’s portfolio in (a) 2003-04 and (b) 2004-05.

Mr Ruddock—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

The Attorney-General’s Department spent the following on advertising:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Amount</th>
<th>Agency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2003-04</td>
<td>$281,853.38</td>
<td>Brown Melhuish Fishlock Pty Ltd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004-05</td>
<td>$474,951.79</td>
<td>Brown Melhuish Fishlock Pty Ltd</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

No other portfolio agency has incurred expenses in relation to advertising.

Low-Emission Hybrid-Engined Vehicles
(Question No. 1880)

Mr Rudd asked the Minister representing the Minister for the Environment and Heritage, in writing, on 9 August 2005:

Will the Government offer rebates or incentives to people who purchase low-emission hybrid-engined vehicles.

Mr Truss—The Minister for the Environment and Heritage has provided the following answer to the honourable member’s question:

The Government has no plans to offer rebates or incentives to people who purchase low emission hybrid-engined vehicles. My Department has examined this option and concluded that it does not represent cost-effective abatement at this stage. The Australian Government is, however, working cooperatively, through the CSIRO Energy Transformed Flagship Programme, with Holden in developing energy management control systems. These systems integrate petrol and electric motors with supercapacitors and advanced batteries for the next generation of hybrid powered vehicles.

Recognising that changes in passenger vehicle engine technologies, such as the introduction of hybrid systems will be very difficult without the support of consumer choice, the Government negotiated a revision in the previous Fuel Consumption Label in 2002 to extend fuel consumption labelling to all vehicles up to 3.5 tonnes and to introduce carbon dioxide emissions labelling to these vehicles. The label became mandatory for all new vehicles from 1 January 2004.

The Green Vehicle Guide was released by the Government in August 2004 and is a valuable tool, which helps car buyers compare the air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions performance, and fuel consumption of new vehicles. The guide highlights that not all motor vehicles have an equal impact on the environment and within any class of vehicles there are vehicles that emit fewer air pollutants or greenhouse gases, as well as those that don’t perform so well. The guide will provide consumers with a greater capacity to choose vehicles that match their transport needs at a lower cost to the environment.

As well as helping car buyers, the guide will provide car manufacturers marketing good performers with simple objective measures of environmental performance. They will be able to use this information in advertising and marketing of new vehicles to achieve a competitive edge.

The Government has also negotiated with Australian vehicle suppliers for a voluntary reduction of about 18 percent in average carbon emissions (covering light commercial vehicles and four wheel drives) by 2010.

Religious Organisations: Funding
(Question No. 1891)

Dr Lawrence asked the Prime Minister, in writing, on 9 August 2005:

QUESTIONS IN WRITING
(1) Is the Minister’s department providing any funds to organisations which require their employees to meet certain religious requirements (eg membership of a particular church or religious group) as a condition of their employment; if so, will the Minister identify the organisations.

(2) Does the Minister’s department provide funds to any organisations for programs which include religious instructions, or faith-based counselling; if so, will the Minister identify the organisations.

(3) Does the Minister’s department place any requirements on church and charitable organisations which receive funds from the department that the funds not be used for religious or evangelical purposes; if so, what are the guidelines or requirements.

(4) How does the Minister’s department ensure that services and programs funded by the Government and delivered by church and charitable organisations are not used for religious or evangelical purposes.

Mr Howard—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:
I am advised that, in relation to the questions asked, the answers are:

(1) No
(2) No
(3) No, not applicable.
(4) Not applicable. The Department does not have guidelines at present, as the issue has not arisen.
   Refer to answers to questions (1), (2) and (3).

*Capitaine Tasman*

*(Question No. 1916)*

Mr Martin Ferguson asked the Minister for Transport and Regional Services, in writing, on 9 August 2005:

(1) Has the vessel *Capitaine Tasman* ever held a continuous or single voyage permit; if so, when.
(2) Is the department aware of the poor immigration record of the *Capitaine Tasman* including ten crew desertions and the presence of three stowaways onboard the vessel over the last thirty months.
(3) What action can the department take to refuse this vessel access to Australian ports.

Mr Truss—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) Yes. The department’s databases indicate that the *Capitaine Tasman* was issued Continuing Voyage Permits on 28 June 2000 and 22 December 2000, and that the ship was issued with a Single Voyage Permit on 22 March 2001.
(2) Yes. The *Capitaine Tasman* was not travelling on a coasting trade permit in the period during which these desertion and stowaway incidents occurred.
(3) The Maritime Transport and Offshore Facilities Security Act 2003 includes a number of mechanisms by which a vessel can be denied entry to Australian ports. These mechanisms can only be effected when a ship has contravened the Act or the international maritime security regime. For example, a ship may be denied entry to port where there are clear grounds to believe that the ship poses an immediate threat to the security or safety of persons or ships or other property, and there are no other appropriate means for removing that threat.

*Commonwealth Property*

*(Question No. 1993)*

Mr Bowen asked the Prime Minister, in writing, on 10 August 2005:

(1) What is name and address of each vacant property under the control of the department and each agency in the Minister’s portfolio (ie properties not actively used by the agency and not leased out).

**QUESTIONS IN WRITING**
(2) In respect of each vacant property, (a) why is it not being actively used and (b) what action plans are in place to have it actively used.

Mr Howard—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

I am advised that:

(1) There are no vacant properties under the control of my department or agencies within my portfolio.
(2) Not Applicable.

Commonwealth Property
(Question No. 2006)

Mr Bowen asked the Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations, in writing, on 10 August 2005:

(1) What is name and address of each vacant property under the control of the department and each agency in the Minister’s portfolio (ie properties not actively used by the agency and not leased out).
(2) In respect of each vacant property, (a) why is it not being actively used and (b) what action plans are in place to have it actively used.

Mr Andrews—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) DEWR has only one (1) vacant property under its control that is not actively used or sub-leased. This is located at 42-44 Waymouth Street, Adelaide.
(2) The lease on this building was transferred to DEWR as a result of the Machinery of Government change in relation to ATSIS. Staff have been progressively moved out of this property and into the DEWR Adelaide office. The lease is currently being transferred to the Office of Indigenous Policy Coordination. As of 1 September 2005, DEWR will no longer have responsibility for this property or associated costs.

Small Business Interest Rate Relief Program
(Question No. 2035)

Mr Fitzgibbon asked the Minister for Industry, Tourism and Resources, in writing, on 11 August 2005:

(2) What was the total value of grants approved in (a) 2002-2003, (b) 2003-2004, and (c) 2004-2005.
(3) What sum was allocated to the SBIRR in (a) 2003-2004, (b) 2004-2005, and (c) 2005-2006.

Mr Ian Macfarlane—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) (a) Centrelink (the deliverer of this program) has advised that 452 applications for the Small Business Interest Rate Relief Program were received but the relevant information was not re-
corded on Centrelink’s computer system for all these claims and therefore electorate data is not available.

(b) Centrelink advises that 182 businesses were approved for the Small Business Interest Rate Relief Program. These businesses were located in the following electorates.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Electorate</th>
<th>Number of Small Business Interest Rate Relief Approvals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Banks</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barker</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bendigo</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calare</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capricornia</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chisholm</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cowper</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dawson</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farrer</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forde</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Groom</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gwydir</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hawkes</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hume</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hunter</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indi</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kalgoorlie</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lyne</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mallee</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maranoa</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McEwan</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McMillan</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Murray</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New England</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O’Connor</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Page</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parkes</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pearce</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Riverina</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shortland</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wannon</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wide Bay</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>182</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: Data based upon postcode data and electorate profiles using July 2004 boundaries.

(2) The total value of grants of the Small Business Interest Rate Relief Program was $1.1m. The breakdown of the expenditure by financial year is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Financial Year</th>
<th>Administered Expenditure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2002/03</td>
<td>$0.14m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003/04</td>
<td>$0.54m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004/05</td>
<td>$0.47m</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
(3) In addition to the funds set out in response to question (2) above, the sum allocated to Centrelink for the delivery of the SBIRR by financial year was as follows:

- 2002/03 $0.505m
- 2003/04 $0.239m (plus $49423 for exit strategy - advertising)
- 2004/05 $0.049m
- Total $0.842m

All other costs were absorbed by the Department of Industry, Tourism and Resources.

**Illawarra Regional Airport**

(Question No. 2040)

Ms Bird asked the Minister for Transport and Regional Services, in writing, on 11 August 2005:

Is the Illawarra Regional Airport classified for protection by Regional Rapid Deployment Teams, if not, why not.

Mr Truss—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

Yes.

**Overseas Development Assistance**

(Question No. 2065)

Mr Jenkins asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs, in writing, on 16 August 2005:

(1) Is he able to say which Development Assistance Committee (DAC) member countries have met the UN Millennium Project’s recommended overseas aid contribution of 0.7 percent of Gross National Income (GNI).

(2) What efforts has Australia made to meet the UN Millennium Project’s recommended overseas aid contribution of 0.7 percent of GNI.

Mr Downer—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) According to ‘Final Official Development Assistance (ODA) data for 2003’ produced by the OECD Development Assistance Committee on 31 January 2005, five countries have met the 0.7 per cent ODA/GNI target. They are Sweden, Norway, Luxembourg, Denmark and the Netherlands.

(2) The Australian Government supports the UN target of 0.7 per cent ODA/GNI as an aspiration and endeavours to maintain aid at the highest level, consistent with the needs of partner countries, our own capacity to assist and other priorities for Australian Government expenditure.

At the UN World Summit on 14-16 September 2005, the Prime Minister, the Hon John Howard MP, announced Australia’s goal to increase its overseas aid allocation to about $4 billion a year by 2010. This represents a doubling of Australia’s ODA from 2004 levels.

From 2000-01 to 2005-06, the Australian Government has provided close to $12 billion in ODA. Australia has recorded a real increase in ODA over this period of more than 30 per cent. Australia is one of only six OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) donor countries to record consecutive real increases in ODA every year since 2001.

**Australian Technical Colleges**

(Question No. 2115)

Mr Hayes asked the Minister for Vocational and Technical Education, in writing, on 18 August 2005:
(1) When will he announce the location for the Australian Technical College to be located in Western Sydney.

(2) What is the delay in announcing the location for the Australian Technical College in Western Sydney.

(3) Why has he announced that Adelaide will be the location for an additional Technical College.

(4) By what sum does the additional college reduce the sum available for the other colleges.

(5) Will the Western Sydney Technical College still be required to commence operation in 2006.

Mr Hardgrave—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) The Australian Technical College for the Western Sydney region was announced on 16 September 2005.

(2) Two proposals for the Western Sydney region were initially assessed as suitable but requiring further work. On the basis of the supplementary information provided, the proposal from the consortium led by the Catholic Education Office was selected as the most suitable proposal.

(3) A strong case was made that the Adelaide region could support two Colleges, given its manufacturing base, resulting large number of trades occupations, the distance between these major industrial regions and significant skills needs in Adelaide. The Australian Government has decided to support two strong proposals in the Adelaide region.

(4) The additional College does not reduce the amount of funding for the other Colleges.

(5) No. There was never a requirement for all Colleges to start in 2006.

Abortion

(Question No. 2148)

Mr Murphy asked the Minister for Health and Ageing, in writing, on 18 August 2005:

(1) Has he read the article in The Age on 16 May 2005 titled ‘Abortion linked to premature birth risk’.

(2) Can he say whether the reported finding in a French study by Doctor Caroline Moreau from France’s National Institute of Health and Medical Research, that the risk of premature delivery in pregnancies following abortions can increase by as much as 70 per cent, is valid.

(3) Is he taking action to warn the estimated 100,000 Australian women each year who have induced abortions that the risk of premature births in subsequent pregnancies can be increased by 70 per cent; if not, why not.

Mr Abbott—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) I have been provided with a copy of the article.

(2) My department has not reviewed the study in depth but advises that it is broadly consistent with other studies that suggest that there may be an increased overall risk of preterm delivery following an induced abortion. To put this risk in context it should be noted that the majority of women who have had an induced abortion do not have preterm deliveries.

(3) Discussion of the possible risks of medical procedures is part of gaining informed consent and is the responsibility of the medical practitioner conducting the procedure.

Office of Trade Negotiations: Staffing

(Question No. 2151)

Mr Rudd asked the Minister for Trade, in writing, on 18 August 2005:

(1) How many staff are allocated to the Office of Trade Negotiations.
(2) How many staff were allocated to the Office of Trade Negotiations in (a) 2001, (b) 2002, (c) 2003, and (d) 2004.

(3) How many staff are working on (a) the World Trade Organisation (WTO) Doha Round of negotiations, (b) Free Trade Agreement (FTA) negotiations and (c) jointly on the WTO Doha Round and FTAs.

Mr Vaile—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) There are 73.8 full-time equivalent (FTE) staff allocated to the Office of Trade Negotiations (OTN) for 2005-06.

(2) FTE staffing allocations to OTN from 2000-01 to 2004-05 were as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2000-01</th>
<th>2001-02</th>
<th>2002-03</th>
<th>2003-04</th>
<th>2004-05</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Staff</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>71.5</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(3) Note: figures current as at Friday 9 September 2005; numbers may change according to the different resources requirements of the negotiations as they proceed.

(a) Out of OTN’s total staff allocation of 73.8 FTE staff, there are 68.8 FTE staff focused on the Doha Round negotiations in Canberra.

(b) One OTN staff member provides full time legal advice to the FTA negotiation teams. In addition, the Trade Commitments Branch in OTN currently has four staff who work full time on implementing existing FTAs.

(c) A number of the 68.8 FTE staff identified in 3(a) also contribute to the FTA agenda as required. Nine staff in OTN regularly work on both the WTO and the broad FTA agenda, including providing advice on sectoral issues in current FTA negotiations. Staff in our overseas posts also work on WTO issues, key amongst these being our permanent mission to the WTO in Geneva which employs 12 A-based staff. Staff at a number of overseas posts also provide advice in support of the department’s FTA agenda.

Office of Trade Negotiations: Staffing
(Question No. 2152)

Mr Rudd asked the Minister for Trade, in writing, on 18 August 2005:

(1) How many staff are allocated to the Trade Development Division.

(2) How many staff were allocated to the Trade Development Division in (a) 2001, (b) 2002, (c) 2003, and (d) 2004.

(3) How many staff in the Trade Development Division work on Free Trade Agreements (FTAs).

(4) What is the structure in the Trade Development Division for pursuing FTAs.

Mr Vaile—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) There are 71.8 full-time equivalent (FTE) staff allocated to the Trade Development Division (TDD) for 2005-06.

(2) FTE staffing allocations to TDD from 2000-01 to 2004-05 were as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2000-01</th>
<th>2001-02</th>
<th>2002-03</th>
<th>2003-04</th>
<th>2004-05</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Staff</td>
<td>73.0</td>
<td>70.0</td>
<td>69.3</td>
<td>69.4</td>
<td>65.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(3) There are currently 8 FTE in the Trade Development Division working directly on Free Trade Agreements. Other staff within TDD contribute to the FTA agenda as required.
(4) The Trade Development Division (TDD) is responsible for the negotiations of the Australia-United Arab Emirates FTA. A small group of staff in TDD have been assigned to co-ordinate these negotiations. The lead negotiator is the First Assistant Secretary.

Free Trade Agreements
(Question No. 2153)

Mr Rudd asked the Minister for Trade, in writing, on 18 August 2005:

(1) What areas of his department other than Office of Trade Negotiations and the Trade Development Division are involved in the negotiation of Free Trade Agreements (FTAs).
(2) What role do the geographic divisions play in the negotiation of FTAs.
(3) What role do the geographic divisions play once FTA negotiations have been finalised.

Mr Vaile—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) The department has established a China FTA Task Force responsible for negotiating the FTA with China, and the Asia Trade Task Force which is negotiating both the ASEAN-Australia-NZ FTA and the Malaysia FTA. The UAE FTA negotiations are led by a team located in TDD. In addition, an FTA Unit has been established to provide sectoral expertise and support to the FTA Task Forces. The relevant geographic divisions support the work of these Task Forces and the FTA Unit. Posts and state offices also make an important contribution to work on Free Trade Agreements.
(2) The relevant geographic divisions work closely with the teams which are responsible for carrying forward the negotiations.
(3) Once the negotiations have been finalised the relevant geographic divisions are responsible for the implementation of the agreements in collaboration with the Trade Commitments Branch of OTN.

Free Trade Agreements
(Question No. 2154)

Mr Rudd asked the Minister for Trade, in writing, on 18 August 2005:
What additional resources have been provided to his department in (a) 2004-2005 and (b) 2005-2006 to enable it to meet the demands imposed on it from the Free Trade Agreements being negotiated.

Mr Vaile—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(a) None.
(b) The Government has announced that it will allocate $11 million at additional estimates to a range of government agencies, including DFAT, to assist with the costs associated with progressing the free trade agreements agenda.

Australia-China Free Trade Agreement
(Question No. 2155)

Mr Rudd asked the Minister for Trade, in writing, on 18 August 2005:

(1) What additional resources have been provided to the Department to enable it to negotiate the Australia-China Free Trade Agreement (FTA).
(2) How are Australia-China FTA negotiations proceeding.
(3) What are the major issues arising in the Australia-China FTA negotiations.
(4) What are China’s main defensive interests in the FTA negotiations.
(5) What are Australia’s main defensive interests in the FTA negotiations.
(6) What is the timeline for the Australia China FTA negotiations.
Mr Vaile—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) The Government has announced that it will allocate $11 million at additional estimates to a range of government agencies, including DFAT, to assist with the costs associated with progressing the free trade agreements agenda.

(2) Prime Minister John Howard, together with China’s Premier Wen Jiabao, agreed on 18 April in Beijing to launch negotiations on a free trade agreement (FTA) between Australia and China. An introductory meeting between the two governments was held on 23 May in Sydney and reached agreement on a number of procedural issues, including the initial establishment of four negotiating groups covering agriculture and sanitary and phytosanitary measures; non-agricultural goods; services and investment; and other issues. The first substantive meeting of the negotiations took place in Beijing 22-24 August and focussed on an in-depth exchange of information on each other’s trade and investment regimes building on the joint FTA feasibility study. The next meeting is tentatively scheduled to take place in early November in Beijing to continue the information exchange. This phase of the negotiations with the Chinese government is aimed at gaining a clear understanding of how China’s trading system works, and how to address the areas of concern for Australian exporters.

(3) The FTA negotiations will cover all sectors, involving liberalisation and facilitation across trade in goods, services and investment. The negotiation will be conducted as a single undertaking – that is, nothing will be agreed until everything is agreed.

Preliminary consultation and the work done for the joint FTA feasibility study have pointed to a wide range of barriers to trade and investment that will need to be addressed in the negotiations. As well as tariff and non-tariff trade restrictions, Australian business has also raised a variety of ‘behind the border barriers’ including regulatory barriers, such as problems with enforcement of intellectual property rights and restrictions on foreign ownership in certain areas, unpredictability of recourse to legal and administrative remedy, discrepancy of interpretation of regulations between provincial governments and central government, and different understandings of contractual obligations.

(4) We are still in an exploratory phase in the negotiations but China has indicated generally that it has sensitivities about agriculture and services.

(5) Australian producers, particularly in the areas of textiles, clothing, footwear, and auto parts have expressed concerns about the impact on Australian production of an FTA with China.

(6) The Australian Government is not putting a timeframe on the negotiations – it will spend as much time as is required to negotiate a high-quality agreement that contains commercially meaningful outcomes for Australian businesses and is consistent with the rules of the World Trade Organization (WTO).

Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (Question No. 2156)

Mr Rudd asked the Minister for Trade, in writing, on 18 August 2005:

(1) What additional resources has the Trade Development Division received to enable it to prepare for Australia’s hosting of APEC in 2007.

(2) What role does Australia expect to play in assisting Vietnam to host APEC in 2006.

(3) Will Australia provide additional officers to the Australian Embassy in Hanoi to assist with the APEC workload in 2006.

(4) Will Australia assist the Vietnamese Government by placing DFAT officers in Vietnamese agencies in 2006 to assist with the running of APEC.
(5) Which Government department will have carriage of policy initiatives for APEC in 2007.

**Mr Vaile**—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) The Government has allocated a total of $13.98 million for the financial years 2005-06, 2006-07 and 2007-08 to the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) to enable it to prepare for Australia’s hosting of APEC in 2007.

(2) The Government has offered assistance to Vietnam in hosting APEC in 2006. There are three elements to the offer:

   (a) a package of capacity building assistance (approximately $500,000), including logistical and English language training, trade policy development assistance and a facility to respond to emerging needs, to be provided by AusAID. The package is still in the design phase but a bilateral MOU is expected to be signed shortly;

   (b) an offer of a DFAT member of staff to work with Vietnam during 2006 to assist with management of the APEC year policy agenda; and

   (c) an offer to co-operate more intensively with Vietnam in APEC to develop joint initiatives that might be pursued over the two year period, 2006-2007.

(3) Yes

(4) See answer 2(b) above.

(5) The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) has responsibility for coordination of APEC policy development in 2007. Australian Government agencies will be involved in various aspects throughout the year.

**Minister for Family and Community Services**

(Question No. 2171)

**Mr Bowen** asked the Minister representing the Minister for Family and Community Services, in writing, on 18 August 2005:

(1) Has the Minister received any training, coaching or assistance in public speaking or voice projection at public expense since the Minister took office; if so, what was the cost of this training.

(2) What is the name and postal address of the individual or organisation(s) which provided the training.

**Mr Hockey**—The Minister for Family and Community Services has provided the following answer to the honourable member’s question:

(1) No.

(2) Not applicable.

**Child Care**

(Question No. 2191)

**Ms George** asked the Minister representing the Minister for Family and Community Services, in writing, on 5 September 2005:

What is the (a) highest, (b) lowest, and (c) average fee charged per day for long day care in the electoral division of Throsby.

**Mr Hockey**—The Minister for Family and Community Services has provided the following answer to the honourable member’s question:

(a) (b) (c) We do not routinely collect this data by electorate. Refer to the 2004 Australian Government Census of Child Care Services for NSW fee data.
Community Settlement Services Scheme
(Question No. 2246)

Mr Price asked the Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs, in writing, on 6 September 2005:

(1) What projects for the settlement of migrants from the African continent were funded in (a) 2002, (b) 2003, (c) 2004 and (d) 2005 and in respect of each project (a) what sum was allocated and (b) what is the name and address of each organisation that received funds.

(2) Has the department assessed the projects; if so, what were the outcomes.

Mr John Cobb—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) (a), (b), (c), (d), (a) and (b) Projects for the settlement of migrants from Africa are funded under the Community Settlement Services Scheme (CSSS) and direct funding for Migrant Resource Centres (MRCs) and Migrant Service Agencies (MSAs). Information is provided on a financial year basis in the attached table.

Projects focused specifically on African arrivals have been highlighted. It should be noted that African arrivals would likely benefit from a range of other generic projects as well as ethno-specific projects, such as those targeted to refugee youth, women, community settlement services and from the range of services provided by MRCs/MSAs.

Organisations that receive project funding to deliver settlement services are, through the Department, accountable to the Government and must demonstrate that the funds have been used in the effective administration and delivery of an agreed work program. The Department monitors and assesses individual projects through regular reporting requirements, including progress reports on the work program, client service statistics, financial reports, audited financial statements and other reports as required. These reports combined indicate progress towards meeting the project outcomes. All projects listed in the attachment are subject to this assessment and have met program requirements.
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<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Street</th>
<th>Locality</th>
<th>S/T</th>
<th>PIC</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Project</th>
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**QUESTIONS IN WRITING**
### QUESTIONS IN WRITING

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<th>Duration</th>
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<td>Christian Community Aid Service Inc.</td>
<td>12 Lakeside Road</td>
<td>Eastwood</td>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>2122</td>
<td>3 Year</td>
<td>Generalist settlement services for migrant communities in the Ryde/Hunter’s Hill areas</td>
<td>50,700.00</td>
<td>51,700.00</td>
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<td>South Eastern Region Migrant Resource Centre</td>
<td>Level 1, 314 Thomas Street</td>
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<td>3175</td>
<td>2 Year</td>
<td>South East refugee youth settlement program</td>
<td>49,300.00</td>
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<td>South Eastern Region Migrant Resource Centre</td>
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<td>2 Year</td>
<td>Settlement services to new and emerging communities</td>
<td>49,300.00</td>
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<td>Eastern and Central Africa Communities of Victoria Inc</td>
<td>Grattan Gardens Community Centre, 40 Grattan Street</td>
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<td>VIC</td>
<td>3181</td>
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<td>Sub-Saharan African holistic settlement services in Greater Melbourne</td>
<td>61,900.00</td>
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<td>Ethnic Council of Shepardton and District Inc.</td>
<td>309 Maude Street</td>
<td>Shepparton</td>
<td>VIC</td>
<td>3630</td>
<td>3 Year</td>
<td>Planning and co-ordination of settlement services for the Ethnic Council of Shepparton and District Inc.</td>
<td>61,900.00</td>
<td>62,900.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Multicultural Development Association Inc.</td>
<td>Level 2, 57 Old Cleveland Road</td>
<td>Stones Corner</td>
<td>QLD</td>
<td>4120</td>
<td>3 Year</td>
<td>Community development and support</td>
<td>95,000.00</td>
<td>75,000.00</td>
<td>105,000.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Multicultural Development Association Inc.</td>
<td>Level 2, 57 Old Cleveland Road</td>
<td>Stones Corner</td>
<td>QLD</td>
<td>4120</td>
<td>3 Year</td>
<td>Community Capacity Building and Case Management</td>
<td>95,000.00</td>
<td>75,000.00</td>
<td>105,000.00</td>
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<td>Al Zahra Muslim Women’s Association Inc.</td>
<td>9 Wollongong Rd</td>
<td>Arncliffe</td>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>2205</td>
<td>3 Year</td>
<td>Provide Settlement Services to Muslim women and their families services in St George and Sutherland Shire Volunteer Training Program</td>
<td>60,000.00</td>
<td>45,900.00</td>
<td>62,424.00</td>
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<td>Eritrean Islamic Society in Australia</td>
<td>155/33 Alfred Street</td>
<td>North Melbourne</td>
<td>VIC</td>
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<tr>
<td>Supreme Islamic Council of New South Wales Inc</td>
<td>4 White Place</td>
<td>South Windsor</td>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>2756</td>
<td>2 Year</td>
<td>Muslim Community Settlement and Support Services</td>
<td>57,800.00</td>
<td>38,698.00</td>
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<td>Lebanese Community Council of NSW</td>
<td>Level 3, Office 3B 40 Raymond Street</td>
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<td>NSW</td>
<td>2200</td>
<td>2 Year</td>
<td>Provision of settlement services to newly arrived Arabic Speaking migrants and refugees.</td>
<td>60,000.00</td>
<td>45,900.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lebanese Community Council of NSW</td>
<td>Level 3, Office 3B 40 Raymond Street</td>
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<td>NSW</td>
<td>2200</td>
<td>2 Year</td>
<td>Expansion of settlement programs with focus on employment and training of Arabic youth and women</td>
<td>65,000.00</td>
<td>49,725.00</td>
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<td>2200</td>
<td>2 Year</td>
<td>Settlement services to Muslim women and refugees in Western Sydney</td>
<td>60,000.00</td>
<td>48,491.00</td>
<td>62,057.00</td>
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<td>Level 3, Office 3B 40 Raymond Street</td>
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<td>2200</td>
<td>2 Year</td>
<td>Arabic-speakers services in Bankstown and Fairfield</td>
<td>63,000.00</td>
<td>53,218.00</td>
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<td>Lebanese Community Council of NSW</td>
<td>Level 3, Office 3B 40 Raymond Street</td>
<td>Bankstown</td>
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<td>2200</td>
<td>2 Year</td>
<td>Settlement services for recent and longer term Jewish migrants</td>
<td>10,000.00</td>
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<td>United Muslim Women Association Inc.</td>
<td>47 Wangee Rd</td>
<td>Lakemba</td>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>2195</td>
<td>3 Year</td>
<td>Muslim Women’s Project</td>
<td>60,000.00</td>
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<td>Arab Council Australia Inc.</td>
<td>Level 1, 194 Stacey Street</td>
<td>Bankstown</td>
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<td>2200</td>
<td>2 Year</td>
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<td>48,491.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jewish Community Services Inc</td>
<td>Torrens Building 220 Victoria Square 49 Molle St</td>
<td>Adelaide</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>5000</td>
<td>2 Year</td>
<td>Settlement services for recent and longer term Jewish migrants</td>
<td>25,000.00</td>
<td>18,750.00</td>
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<td>Migrant Resource Centre (Southern Tasmania) Incorporated</td>
<td>18 Chester Street</td>
<td>Oakleigh</td>
<td>VIC</td>
<td>3166</td>
<td>2 Year</td>
<td>African Communities Organisational Development</td>
<td>51,600.00</td>
<td>39,465.00</td>
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<td>South Central Region Migrant Resource Centre</td>
<td>78-82 Second Avenue</td>
<td>Altona North</td>
<td>VIC</td>
<td>3025</td>
<td>2 Year</td>
<td>Refugee and migrant casework service in Monash, Kingston, Glen Eira and Bayside Community settlement support service, referral and advocacy for migrants and refugees.</td>
<td>58,800.00</td>
<td>44,955.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Islamic Women’s Welfare Council of Victoria</td>
<td>169 Fitzroy Street</td>
<td>Fitzroy</td>
<td>VIC</td>
<td>3065</td>
<td>2 Year</td>
<td>Young Muslim Women’s Communication Skills Project</td>
<td>68,400.00</td>
<td>44,955.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Islamic Women’s Welfare Council of Victoria</td>
<td>169 Fitzroy Street</td>
<td>Fitzroy</td>
<td>VIC</td>
<td>3065</td>
<td>3 Year</td>
<td>Settlement Programs for Muslim Women in Victoria</td>
<td>58,800.00</td>
<td>44,955.00</td>
<td>61,140.00</td>
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QUESTIONS IN WRITING
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<th>Duration</th>
<th>Project</th>
<th>2002-03($)</th>
<th>2003-04($)</th>
<th>2004-05($)</th>
<th>2005-06($)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Victorian Immigrant and Refugee Women’s Coalition Inc.</td>
<td>Level 3, 489 Elizabeth Street</td>
<td>Melbourne</td>
<td>VIC</td>
<td>3000</td>
<td>2 Year</td>
<td>Resource, train and partner: a grassroots approach to the needs of emerging women’s groups</td>
<td>58,800.00</td>
<td>44,955.00</td>
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<td>Australian Lebanese Welfare Inc.</td>
<td>Level 1 233 Sydney Road</td>
<td>Brunswick</td>
<td>VIC</td>
<td>3056</td>
<td>3 Year</td>
<td>Newly Arrived Arabic Refugees and Migrants in Metropolitan Melbourne</td>
<td>54,600.00</td>
<td>41,760.00</td>
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<td>African Australian Welfare Council of Victoria Inc</td>
<td>Level 1 233 Sydney Road</td>
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<td>2 Year</td>
<td>African Settlement Support Project focussing on families, women and youth</td>
<td>81,420.00</td>
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<td>Australian Red Cross Society - Queensland</td>
<td>397 Adelaide Street</td>
<td>Brisbane</td>
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<td>4000</td>
<td>3 Year</td>
<td>African Communities Settlement Project</td>
<td>70,000.00</td>
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<td>Multicultural Development Association Inc.</td>
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<td>1 Year</td>
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<td>Communicare Inc.</td>
<td>28 Cecil Avenue</td>
<td>Cannington</td>
<td>WA</td>
<td>6107</td>
<td>1 Year</td>
<td>Sierra Leone Community Casework, Referral Advocacy and Support Services in Perth</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>41,200.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Communicare Inc.</td>
<td>28 Cecil Avenue</td>
<td>Cannington</td>
<td>WA</td>
<td>6107</td>
<td>1 Year</td>
<td>Sierra Leone Community Casework, Referral Advocacy and Support Services in the South East Perth Region</td>
<td>0.00</td>
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<td>Northern Suburbs Migrant Resource Centre Inc</td>
<td>1/14 Chesterfield Road</td>
<td>Mirrabooka</td>
<td>WA</td>
<td>6061</td>
<td>1 Year</td>
<td>Casework, Referral, and Information Services to the African Community in the Northern Suburbs of Perth</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>12,666.00</td>
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<td>Coptic Orthodox Church - Diocese of Sydney and Affiliated Regions</td>
<td>14 Arthur St</td>
<td>Bexley</td>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>2207</td>
<td>1 Year</td>
<td>Casework, Information and Referral for Newly Arrived Coptic Migrants and Refugees in the Sydney Diocese</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>45,900.00</td>
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<td>Northern Migrant Resource Centre</td>
<td>251 High St</td>
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<td>VIC</td>
<td>3072</td>
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<td>South Eastern Region Migrant Resource Centre</td>
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<td>Senior Social Worker</td>
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<td>Level 2 125 Main Street</td>
<td>Blacktown</td>
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<td>2148</td>
<td>2 Year</td>
<td>Casework, information and referral services for Sudanese, Sierra Leone, Ghanaian, Tamil-Speaking migrants and humanitarian youth arrivals in Sydney</td>
<td>0.00</td>
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<td>2002-03($)</td>
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<tr>
<td>South Eastern Region Migrant Resource Centre Communications Inc.</td>
<td>Level 1, 314 Thomas Street</td>
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<td>VIC</td>
<td>1 Year</td>
<td>Refugee Youth Services in the South Eastern Region of Melbourne</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>39,020.00</td>
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<td></td>
<td>28 Cecil Avenue</td>
<td>Cannington</td>
<td>WA</td>
<td>1 Year</td>
<td>Ethiopian Youth and Families Casework, Referral, Advocacy and Information Services in the Perth Metropolitan Area.</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>41,200.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
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<td>Macarthur Diversity Services Inc</td>
<td>Level 2, Centre Court Building 101 Queen St</td>
<td>Campbelltown</td>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>2 Year</td>
<td>Casework and Community Development for Small and Emerging Communities in the Macarthur Region</td>
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<td>7 Hartington Street</td>
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<td>Casework, groupwork and advocacy services for newly migrant youth in Shepparton and Cobram</td>
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<td>Casework, Information, Referral and Advocating Services to Newly Arrived and Post-IHSS Migrants on the Mid-North Coast of NSW</td>
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<td>38,786.00</td>
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<td>40 Alice St</td>
<td>Harris Park</td>
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<td>1 Year</td>
<td>Settlement services for the Arabic speaking communities in the Parramatta local government area</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>22,950.00</td>
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<td>16 -18 Parkes Street</td>
<td>Parramatta</td>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>2 Year</td>
<td>Settlement information, casework and referrals for migrants and refugees from Southern Sudan, Nuba Mountains and other areas affected by war</td>
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<td>40,600.00</td>
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<td>Suite 4 554 Marrickville Road</td>
<td>Dulwich Hill</td>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>1 Year</td>
<td>Information and referral for newly arrived Arabic-speaking migrants in Parramatta and the Inner West</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>38,786.00</td>
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<td>18/22 Chesterfield Road</td>
<td>Mirrabooka</td>
<td>WA</td>
<td>2 Year</td>
<td>Lifeskills Development in Household Management and Family Care in the Perth Metropolitan Area</td>
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<td>Melkite Catholic Eparchy Corporation</td>
<td>80 Waterloo Road</td>
<td>Greenacre</td>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>2190</td>
<td>1 Year</td>
<td>Information and referral services for the Melkite and other Arabic speaking communities in Greenacre and Guildford</td>
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<td>South Metropolitan Migrant Resource Centre</td>
<td>241-243 High Street</td>
<td>Fremantle</td>
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<td>1 Year</td>
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<td>Catholic Migrant Centre</td>
<td>25 Victoria Square</td>
<td>Perth</td>
<td>WA</td>
<td>6000</td>
<td>1 Year</td>
<td>Casework, Referral and Advocacy Services to Refugee and Humanitarian Entrants in the Perth Metropolitan Area</td>
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<td>Kanwork Options Centre Inc</td>
<td>Old Railway Building</td>
<td>Katanning</td>
<td>WA</td>
<td>6317</td>
<td>1 Year</td>
<td>Referral, Advocacy and Information Services for the Afghan, Sudanese and Malay Communities in the Katanning Local Government Area.</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>23,000.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Roman Catholic Trust Corporation for the Diocese of Cairns operating as Cen- tacare Cairns</td>
<td>Suite 21, Level 1, Virginia House 68 Abbott Street</td>
<td>Cairns</td>
<td>QLD</td>
<td>4870</td>
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<td>Migrant Resource Centre of Newcastle and the Hunter Region</td>
<td>8 Chaucer St</td>
<td>Hamilton</td>
<td>NSW</td>
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<td>1 Year Improve access to mainstream service providers by African communities in Adelaide</td>
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<td>Room 4, Torrens Building 220 Victoria Square</td>
<td>Adelaide</td>
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<td>5000</td>
<td>2 Year Provision of support programs and information for Muslim women and their families in South Australia</td>
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<td>2 Year Casework and group services to sole parent Muslim women in Victoria</td>
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<td>74 Phillip Street</td>
<td>Broadmeadows</td>
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<td>1 Year Integrated Casework, group work and information services for Arabic Youth and Isolated women</td>
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<td>552 Princes Highway</td>
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<td>1 Year Information, Referral and Casework for the Arabic-Speaking Community in St George and Sutherland</td>
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**QUESTIONS IN WRITING**
### Questions in Writing

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<td>Migrant Resource Centre of Newcastle and the Hunter Region</td>
<td>8 Chaucer St</td>
<td>Hamilton</td>
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<td>2303</td>
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<td>Settlement Information Services for Arabic speaking settlers in Parramatta, Holroyd, Blacktown and Penrith</td>
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<td>Casework, Information Sessions and Community Education Services for Newly Arrived Bangladeshi, Burmese and Eritrean Migrants</td>
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<td>Box 3578 c/- Bandik Lodge 101 Lake Terrace East</td>
<td>Mount Gambier</td>
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<td>5290</td>
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<td>Settlement assistance through information provision and referral to refugees and migrants in the South East of South Australia</td>
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<td>2/20 Parsons Street</td>
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<td>61 Lowan Loop</td>
<td>Karawara</td>
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<td>3 Pilgrim Street.</td>
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<td>110 Crittenden Road</td>
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<td>Capacity building, community development and support services for Chinese and other migrants in Adelaide</td>
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<td>Level 4 171 Bigge Street</td>
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<td>3 Year</td>
<td>Information, referral, community capacity building and settlement planning and development for humanitarian entrants in Liverpool.</td>
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<td>62 South Street</td>
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<td>C/- Australian Islamic College 139 President Street</td>
<td>Kewdale</td>
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<td>Information, referral and advocacy services to Muslim women in south east and south west metropolitan Perth.</td>
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<td>288 Franklin Street</td>
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<td>SA</td>
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<td>Information, community capacity and referral services to Greek speaking migrants living in Adelaide.</td>
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<td>222 Torrens Rd</td>
<td>Renown Park</td>
<td>SA</td>
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<td>Information provision to the Italian community and assist new and emerging community organisations in capacity building.</td>
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<td>7 Hartington Street</td>
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<td>Provide casework, advocacy and community education services to Greek speaking migrants in Victoria.</td>
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<td>Coptic Orthodox Church - Diocese of Sydney and Affiliated Regions</td>
<td>14 Arthur St</td>
<td>Bexley</td>
<td>NSW</td>
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<td>2 Year Information, referral and community capacity building for Coptic migrants and refugees in Sydney.</td>
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<td>1/14 Chesterfield Road</td>
<td>Mirrabooka</td>
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<td>6061</td>
<td>1 Year Information, referral and advocacy services to the African community in the northern suburbs of Perth</td>
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<td>Anglicare Diocese of the NT</td>
<td>5 Nemaluk Drive</td>
<td>Lismore</td>
<td>NT</td>
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<td>3 Year Casework, advocacy and referral services for migrants and refugees in Darwin and surrounds</td>
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<td>15 Hunter Street</td>
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<td>3 Year Information, referral services and community development for the Somali community in Western Sydney</td>
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<td>3 Year Information and referral services for recently arrived migrant and humanitarian women in Western Sydney</td>
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<td>Migrant Resource Centre Westgate Region</td>
<td>78-82 Second Avenue</td>
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<td>Lebanese Moslem Association</td>
<td>84 Wangee Rd</td>
<td>Lakemba</td>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>2195</td>
<td>1 Year Information, referral and community development services for the Muslim community in Canterbury-Bankstown and outreaching to Liverpool</td>
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<td>Townsville Multicultural Support Group Inc.</td>
<td>63 Ross River Road</td>
<td>Mundingburra</td>
<td>QLD</td>
<td>4812</td>
<td>1 Year</td>
<td>Provision of information, advocacy and community capacity building to Sudanese, Kurdish and Iraqi communities in the Townsville region.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jesuit Social Services</td>
<td>371 Church St</td>
<td>Richmond</td>
<td>VIC</td>
<td>3121</td>
<td>1 Year</td>
<td>Capacity building, support and referral services for refugee youth in Moonee Valley and North Melbourne.</td>
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<td>Horn of African Communities Network in Vic. Inc.</td>
<td>3 Pilgrim Street.</td>
<td>Footscray</td>
<td>VIC</td>
<td>3011</td>
<td>2 Year</td>
<td>Information, referral and capacity building for Horn of Africa communities in western Melbourne.</td>
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<td>Association of Rhanin El Minieh - Australian Arabic Community Welfare Centre Inc</td>
<td>98 Auburn Rd</td>
<td>Auburn</td>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>2144</td>
<td>1 Year</td>
<td>Information, referral and capacity building for newly arrived Arabic speaking migrants, refugees, and humanitarian entrants in Auburn.</td>
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<td>Afrikan Community In Western Australia</td>
<td>33 Moore St</td>
<td>East Perth</td>
<td>WA</td>
<td>6004</td>
<td>1 Year</td>
<td>Information, referral and general settlement support to African women in the Perth metropolitan area.</td>
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<td>Corporation of Roman Catholic Diocese of Toowoomba</td>
<td>Cnr Union &amp; Annand Sts Eymard House</td>
<td>Toowoomba</td>
<td>QLD</td>
<td>4350</td>
<td>1 Year</td>
<td>Information and referral service for the Sudanese community in Toowoomba.</td>
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<td>South Central Region Migrant Resource Centre</td>
<td>18 Chester Street</td>
<td>Oakleigh</td>
<td>VIC</td>
<td>3166</td>
<td>1 Year</td>
<td>Information, community capacity and referral services for Sudanese women and families in southern Melbourne.</td>
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<td>Australian Refugee Association Inc.</td>
<td>304 Henley Beach Rd</td>
<td>Underdale</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>5032</td>
<td>1 Year</td>
<td>Community capacity building to the Sudanese community in Adelaide.</td>
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<td>Melkite Catholic Eparchy Corporation</td>
<td>80 Waterloo Road</td>
<td>Greenacre</td>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>2190</td>
<td>1 Year</td>
<td>Information, referral and capacity building services for the Melkites and other Arabic speakers in Canterbury - Bankstown, Liverpool and Guildford.</td>
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QUESTIONS IN WRITING
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<td>Multicultural Services Centre of WA Inc.</td>
<td>20 View Street</td>
<td>North Perth</td>
<td>WA</td>
<td>6006</td>
<td>1 Year</td>
<td>Information, referral and capacity building service to African people in Perth’s central and inner northern suburbs focusing on the Somali community</td>
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<td>Centacare Catholic Family Services</td>
<td>383 Albert Street</td>
<td>East Melbourne</td>
<td>VIC</td>
<td>3002</td>
<td>1 Year</td>
<td>Capacity building for southern Sudanese and African migrants in Melbourne</td>
<td>0.00</td>
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<td>Cabramatta Community Centre</td>
<td>Cnr Railway Parade &amp; McBurney Rd</td>
<td>Cabramatta</td>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>2166</td>
<td>1 Year</td>
<td>Information and referral services for newly arrived humanitarian entrants, with a strong focus on Iraqi entrants in Fairfield and Liverpool</td>
<td>0.00</td>
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<td>Youth Action &amp; Policy Assoc. NSW Inc. (YAPA)</td>
<td>146 Devonshire Street</td>
<td>Surry Hills</td>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>1 Year</td>
<td>Refugee youth training and service planning and development project</td>
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<td>Australian Lebanese Association of NSW Ltd</td>
<td>Suite 4 554 Marfellcville Road</td>
<td>Dulwich Hill</td>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>2203</td>
<td>1 Year</td>
<td>Information and referral services to newly arrived Arabic speakers in Marrickville and Parramatta</td>
<td>0.00</td>
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<td>Migrant Resource Centre (Southern Tasmania) Incorporated</td>
<td>49 Molle St</td>
<td>Hobart</td>
<td>TAS</td>
<td>7000</td>
<td>1 Year</td>
<td>Community development, casework, referral and advocacy services to newly arrived refugee community in the Greater Hobart region</td>
<td>0.00</td>
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<td>Arab Council Australia Inc.</td>
<td>Level 1, 194 Stacey Street</td>
<td>Bankstown</td>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>2200</td>
<td>1 Year</td>
<td>Information and referral and community capacity building for newly arrived Arabic speaking migrants and refugees in Bankstown and Liverpool</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>62,924.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>South Metropolitan Migrant Resource Centre</td>
<td>241-243 High Street</td>
<td>Fremantle</td>
<td>WA</td>
<td>6160</td>
<td>1 Year</td>
<td>Information, referral and advocacy service with a focus on African communities in south east and south west metropolitan Perth</td>
<td>0.00</td>
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<td>Ground Floor, 110 Merrylands Road</td>
<td>Merrylands</td>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>2160</td>
<td>1 Year</td>
<td>Information and referral services for Arabic speaking migrants, refugees &amp; humanitarian entrants in the Fairfield area</td>
<td>0.00</td>
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<td>59,978.00</td>
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**QUESTIONS IN WRITING**

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<td>Australian Lebanese Welfare Group</td>
<td>Ground Floor, 110 Merrylands Road</td>
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<td>1 Year</td>
<td>Information, referral and direct client services for newly arrived Arabic speaking migrants in Holroyd, Blacktown, Parramatta and Penrith</td>
<td>0.00</td>
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<td>African Communities Council of SA Inc.</td>
<td>59 King William St</td>
<td>Adelaide</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>5000</td>
<td>2 Year</td>
<td>Improve access to mainstream services for the African communities in Adelaide</td>
<td>0.00</td>
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<td>60,780.00</td>
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<td>African Australian Welfare Council of Victoria Inc</td>
<td>Level 1 233 Sydney Road</td>
<td>Brunswick</td>
<td>VIC</td>
<td>3056</td>
<td>1 Year</td>
<td>Casework, co-ordination, and outreach services for African communities in the northern and western regions of Melbourne</td>
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<td>977 Ann Street</td>
<td>Fortitude Valley</td>
<td>QLD</td>
<td>4006</td>
<td>1 Year</td>
<td>Information and referral, community development, life skills and settlement support services for African refugees in the inner Brisbane area</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>45,000.00</td>
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<td>Jewish Community Services Inc</td>
<td>Torrens Building</td>
<td>Adelaide</td>
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<td>5000</td>
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<td>Advocacy, referral and volunteer services to Jewish migrants in South Australia</td>
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<td>95-99 Cameron Street</td>
<td>Launceston</td>
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<td>7250</td>
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<td>Community capacity building, referral and planning services to newly arrived migrant youth in Northern Tasmania</td>
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<td>2/20 Parsons Street</td>
<td>Alice Springs</td>
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<td>Assistance to migrants / refugees during first 5 years settlement in remote / regional Central Australia</td>
<td>0.00</td>
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<td>Level 1 233 Sydney Road</td>
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<td>Information, referral and advice to newly arrived Arabic speaking refugees and migrants in Moreland and Hume</td>
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<td>Level 1 233 Sydney Road</td>
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<td>ECHO Bondi Junction Neighbourhood Centre Inc.</td>
<td>27 Spring Street</td>
<td>Bondi Junc-</td>
<td>NSW 2022</td>
<td>2 Year</td>
<td>Information, referral and community capacity building to newly arrived family stream and humanitarian entrants in Randwick and South Sydney</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
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<td>Australian Red Cross Society - Queensland Assisting Collaborative Community Employment Support Services Incorporated</td>
<td>397 Adelaide Street</td>
<td>Brisbane</td>
<td>QLD 4000</td>
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<td>Information, referral and community capacity building for African Youth in Brisbane</td>
<td>0.00</td>
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<td>South West Migrant Service Inc.</td>
<td>3-23 Spencer Street</td>
<td>Bunbury</td>
<td>WA 6230</td>
<td>1 Year</td>
<td>Information and referral services to migrants in the Bunbury area</td>
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<td>Italo-Australian Welfare &amp; Cultural Centre Inc.</td>
<td>209 Fitzgerald Street</td>
<td>Perth</td>
<td>WA 6000</td>
<td>1 Year</td>
<td>Information and referral services for Italian and other migrants in Western Australia</td>
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<td>Portuguese Welfare Centre Inc.</td>
<td>24 Australia Street</td>
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<td>NSW 2050</td>
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<td>Information and referral and community capacity building for Portuguese speakers in Sydney</td>
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<td>Kanwork Options Centre Inc.</td>
<td>Old Railway Building</td>
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<td>WA 6317</td>
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<td>Mirrabooka</td>
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<td>Baulkham Hills Holroyd Parramatta Migrant Resource Centre</td>
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<td>NSW 2150</td>
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<td>Communicare Inc.</td>
<td>28 Cecil Avenue</td>
<td>Cannington</td>
<td>WA 6107</td>
<td>1 Year</td>
<td>Information, referral and advocacy services, focusing on family issues, for African communities in South East Metropolitan Perth.</td>
<td>0.00</td>
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<td>Auburn Migrant Resource Centre Inc.</td>
<td>17 Macquarie Road</td>
<td>Auburn</td>
<td>NSW 2144</td>
<td>3 Year</td>
<td>Information, referral services, case management and service planning for humanitarian entrants in Auburn LGA</td>
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<td>Auburn Migrant Resource Centre Inc.</td>
<td>17 Macquarie Road</td>
<td>Auburn</td>
<td>NSW 2144</td>
<td>2 Year</td>
<td>Information and referral services, casework, and service planning for recent Family Stream arrivals in Auburn LGA</td>
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<td>17 Macquarie Road</td>
<td>Auburn</td>
<td>NSW 2144</td>
<td>3 Year</td>
<td>Direct services and capacity building for African refugee women, Hazara Afghans and arrivals from Central Africa &amp; Ethiopia in Central Western Sydney</td>
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<td>17 Macquarie Road</td>
<td>Auburn</td>
<td>NSW 2144</td>
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<td>Information, referral services, community development and settlement planning for newly arrived humanitarian youth in Auburn LGA</td>
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<td>Macarthur Diversity Services Inc</td>
<td>Level 2, Centre Court Building 101 Queen St</td>
<td>Campbelltown</td>
<td>NSW 2560</td>
<td>3 Year</td>
<td>Information, referral, advocacy and capacity building services for newly arrivals in semi-rural and rural areas of Outer South Western Sydney</td>
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<td>Macarthur Diversity Services Inc</td>
<td>Level 2, Centre Court Building 101 Queen St</td>
<td>Campbelltown</td>
<td>NSW 2560</td>
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<td>Information, referral, capacity building and service planning for recently arrived permanent entrants in Outer South Western Sydney</td>
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<td>27 Spring Street</td>
<td>Bondi Junction</td>
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<td>1 Year</td>
<td>Information, referral, capacity building and service planning and development for newly arrived migrants in Waverley and Woollahra</td>
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</table>

**QUESTIONS IN WRITING**
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Street</th>
<th>Locality</th>
<th>S/T</th>
<th>P/C</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Project</th>
<th>2002-03($)</th>
<th>2003-04($)</th>
<th>2004-05($)</th>
<th>2005-06($)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Assisting Collaborative Community Employment Support</td>
<td>Carmody Place Unit 4/2 Cnr</td>
<td>Logan Central</td>
<td>4114</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 Year</td>
<td>Youth Connections - connecting young (15-25 years) humanitarian entrants to mainstream services in Logan and the Gold Coast</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
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<td>Springvale Community Aid and Advice Bureau Inc.</td>
<td>5 Osborne Avenue</td>
<td>Springvale</td>
<td>3171</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 Year</td>
<td>Casework, information and referral services for newly arrived refugees and migrants in south eastern Melbourne and Greater Dandenong.</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>63,800.00</td>
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<td>1/14 Chesterfield Road</td>
<td>Mirrabooka</td>
<td>6061</td>
<td></td>
<td>2 Year</td>
<td>Information, referral and advocacy services to eligible CSSS clients in the Perth metropolitan area, with an emphasis on African men.</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
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<td>5 Osborne Avenue</td>
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<td>3171</td>
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<td>3 Year</td>
<td>Information, advocacy, referral services and community capacity building for African refugees and humanitarian entrants in Melbourne’s south east.</td>
<td>0.00</td>
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<td>63,800.00</td>
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<td>Level 4 171 Bigge Street</td>
<td>Liverpool</td>
<td>2170</td>
<td></td>
<td>2 Year</td>
<td>Information and referral services and community building for newly arrived humanitarian stream and family stream youth arrivals in Fairfield-Liverpool</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
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<td>61,200.00</td>
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<td>78-82 Second Avenue</td>
<td>Altona North</td>
<td>3025</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 Year</td>
<td>Information, referral and assistance with access to mainstream services and resources in the Wyndham area.</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>63,800.00</td>
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<td>Northern Migrant Resource Centre</td>
<td>251 High St</td>
<td>Preston</td>
<td>3072</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 Year</td>
<td>Information, referral and capacity building for refugee youth in the northern region of Melbourne.</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
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<td>South Central Region Migrant Resource Centre</td>
<td>18 Chester Street</td>
<td>Oakleigh</td>
<td>3166</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 Year</td>
<td>Information, community capacity building and referral services for new arrivals in the inner south and central regions of Melbourne.</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>60,000.00</td>
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<td>Street</td>
<td>Locality</td>
<td>S/T</td>
<td>P/C</td>
<td>Duration</td>
<td>Project</td>
<td>2002-03($)</td>
<td>2003-04($)</td>
<td>2004-05($)</td>
<td>2005-06($)</td>
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<td>18 Chester Street</td>
<td>Oakleigh</td>
<td>VIC</td>
<td>3166</td>
<td>3 Year</td>
<td>Manage settlement service delivery provided to humanitarian and family entrants in Moonee Valley, Melbourne, Stonnington and lower Monash.</td>
<td>0.00</td>
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<td>VIC</td>
<td>3166</td>
<td>3 Year</td>
<td>Information, capacity building and referral for recent refugee and humanitarian arrivals in the south central metropolitan region.</td>
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<td>39 Gymea Bay Road</td>
<td>Gymea</td>
<td>NSW</td>
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<td>1 Year</td>
<td>Information, referral, casework, capacity building, service planning and development for newly arrived migrant and humanitarian entrants in Sutherland</td>
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<td>Australian Refugee Association Inc.</td>
<td>304 Henley Beach Rd</td>
<td>Underdale</td>
<td>SA</td>
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<td>Northern Migrant Resource Centre</td>
<td>251 High St</td>
<td>Preston</td>
<td>VIC</td>
<td>3072</td>
<td>1 Year</td>
<td>Casework and capacity building to newly arrived refugees and migrants and cultural training and advocacy to mainstream services in northern Melbourne.</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
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<td>African Australian Welfare Council of Victoria Inc</td>
<td>Level 1 233 Sydney Road</td>
<td>Brunswick</td>
<td>VIC</td>
<td>3056</td>
<td>2 Year</td>
<td>Community strengthening and capacity building for African communities in Victoria from refugee and humanitarian backgrounds.</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
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<td>Cabramatta Community Centre</td>
<td>Cnr Railway Parade &amp; McBurney Rd</td>
<td>Cabramatta</td>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>2166</td>
<td>2 Year</td>
<td>Information, referral, capacity building and service development for newly arrived humanitarian entrants from Africa in Fairfield-Liverpool</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>68,000.00</td>
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<td>Cabramatta Community Centre</td>
<td>Cnr Railway Parade &amp; McBurney Rd</td>
<td>Cabramatta</td>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>2166</td>
<td>3 Year</td>
<td>Direct services and community development for newly arrived migrants and humanitarian entrants in the outlying areas of Fairfield LGA.</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>68,979.00</td>
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**QUESTIONS IN WRITING**
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<th>Locality</th>
<th>S/T</th>
<th>P/C</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Project</th>
<th>2002-03($)</th>
<th>2003-04($)</th>
<th>2004-05($)</th>
<th>2005-06($)</th>
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<td>Mt Druitt Ethnic Communities Agency</td>
<td>Cnr Buran &amp; Kelly Close</td>
<td>Mt Druitt</td>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>2770</td>
<td>2 Year</td>
<td>Direct services, capacity building and service development for newly arrived migrants and humanitarian entrants in Blacktown and Pourt</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>65,265.00</td>
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<td>African Communities Council Incorporated</td>
<td>4-8 Gladstone Street</td>
<td>Marrickville</td>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>2204</td>
<td>2 Year</td>
<td>Information, referral and service development for newly arrived African communities in Inner Sydney, St George, and Canterbury-Bankstown</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>65,047.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nepean Migrant Access Inc</td>
<td>2-6 Mamre Road</td>
<td>St Marys</td>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>2760</td>
<td>2 Year</td>
<td>Generalist information and referral and service development for newly arrived humanitarian and family stream entrants in Outer Western Sydney</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>65,265.00</td>
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<td>Auburn Migrant Resource Centre Inc</td>
<td>17 Macquarie Road</td>
<td>Auburn</td>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>2144</td>
<td>1 Year</td>
<td>MRC Core Funding</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>319,900.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Macarthur Diversity Services Inc</td>
<td>Level 2, Centre Court Building 101 Queen St</td>
<td>Campbelltown</td>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>2560</td>
<td>1 Year</td>
<td>MRC Core Funding</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>308,200.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Northern Migrant Resource Centre</td>
<td>251 High St</td>
<td>Preston</td>
<td>VIC</td>
<td>3072</td>
<td>1 Year</td>
<td>MRC Core Funding</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>301,600.00</td>
</tr>
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<td>South Central Region Migrant Resource Centre</td>
<td>18 Chester Street</td>
<td>Oakleigh</td>
<td>VIC</td>
<td>3166</td>
<td>1 Year</td>
<td>MRC Core Funding</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>411,055.00</td>
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<td>Liverpool Migrant Resource Centre Inc</td>
<td>Level 4, 171 Bigge Street</td>
<td>Liverpool</td>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>2170</td>
<td>1 Year</td>
<td>MRC Core Funding</td>
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<td>0.00</td>
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<td>Metropolitan Migrant Resource Centre Inc</td>
<td>1/14 Chesterfield Road</td>
<td>Mirrabooka</td>
<td>WA</td>
<td>6061</td>
<td>1 Year</td>
<td>MRC Core Funding</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>412,725.00</td>
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QUESTIONS IN WRITING
Iraq
(Question No. 2268)

Mr Bowen asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs, in writing, on 6 September 2005:

(1) Is he satisfied that the draft Iraqi constitution, as endorsed by the Iraqi parliament, will protect minority Christian groups such as the Assyrians, Chaldeans, Mandaeans and Syriacs, in Iraq.

(2) What representations has the Government made to the Iraqi authorities regarding the ongoing violence against Christian and other ethnic minorities in Iraq.

(3) Has he discussed the matter with his Iraqi counterpart; if not, why not.

(4) Has the Government made any representations to the Iraqi Parliament or Government that it might consider a constitutional provision that protects the rights of Iraqi’s Christian and ethnic minorities; if not, why not.

Mr Downer—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) The revised Draft Iraqi Constitution as signed off by the Constitutional Committee and the then Acting Speaker of the Transitional National Assembly (TAL), and presented to the TAL on 18 September, contains a number of references to the protection of minority religious groups.

- Article 2, Second: “…guarantees full religious rights of freedom of belief and practice for all individuals such as Christians, Yazidis, and Mandi Sabeans”;
- Article 10: “The holy shrines and religious sites in Iraq are religious and civilizational entities and the State is committed to assure and maintain their sanctity, and guarantee the free practice of rituals in them”;
- Article 14: “Iraqis are equal before the law without discrimination based on gender, ethnicity, nationality, origin, colour, religion, sect, belief or opinion, or economic and social status”,
- Article 35, Second: “The State shall guarantee protection of the individual from intellectual, political and religious coercion”;
- Article 39: “Iraqis are free in their commitment to their personal status according to their religions, sects, beliefs, or choices and that shall be regulated by law”;
- Article 40: “Each individual shall have the freedom of thought, conscience and faith”;
- Article 41, First, A: “The followers of all religions and sects are free in the practice of religious rites…”, B: “The state shall guarantee the freedom of worship and the protection of places of worship”.

The Draft Constitution is to be voted on by Iraqis in a referendum scheduled to be held on 15 October.

(2) The Australian Government has consistently condemned all violence committed by terrorists and insurgents against the Iraqi people.

(3) The Australian Government has consistently encouraged the demonstration of restraint and tolerance by the Iraqi people.

(4) See answer (1) above.

Commonwealth Law: Breach of Contract
(Question No. 2276)

Ms Bird asked the Attorney-General, in writing, on 6 September 2005:

(1) How many cases of breach of contract under Commonwealth law have been lodged with the NSW Supreme Court since 1996.
(2) How many cases of breach of contract under Commonwealth law before the NSW Supreme Court have been appealed since 1996.

(3) What is the average length of time for breach of contract cases under Commonwealth law to be determined by the NSW Supreme Court.

Mr Ruddock—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:
The New South Wales Supreme Court publishes annual statistics on matters lodged with it. However, the published statistics do not provide details as to whether these matters alleged breach of contract under Commonwealth law.

In relation to breach of contract matters lodged in the New South Wales Supreme Court and involving the Commonwealth, my Department does not hold statistics. Individual Departments and agencies have the primary responsibility for managing their own litigation, within their areas of responsibility.

Family Tax Benefit
(Question No. 2282)

Mr Hayes asked the Minister representing the Minister for Family and Community Services, in writing, on 6 September 2005:

(1) Further to the answer to question 1452 (Hansard, 18 August 2005, page 171), how many families and individuals in the electoral division of Werriwa (a) in total and (b) as a proportion of all Family Tax benefit (FTB) recipients have an outstanding debt to the Commonwealth due to an overpayment of the F TB in 2004-2005.

(2) For the last three financial years, what is the (a) sum of FTB debt, (b) average FTB debt per family, and (c) average income of the families and individuals who have incurred a debt in the postcode area (i) 2167, (ii) 2168, (iii) 2170, (iv) 2171, (v) 2174, (vi) 2178, (vii) 2179, (viii) 2560, (ix) 2564, (x) 2565, and (xi) 2566.

Mr Hockey—The Minister for Family and Community Services has provided the following answer to the honourable member’s question:

(1) (a) Currently there are a total of 290 Family Tax Benefit customers with a reconciliation debt for 2004-05 in the electoral division of Werriwa. At this stage, not all customers have lodged their tax returns, and outcomes are still to be determined for them.

(b) These 290 customers represent 1.6 per cent of the total Family Tax Benefit population in the electoral division of Werriwa, as at the end of the 2004-05 financial year.

(2) The sum of debt, average Family Tax Benefit debt per family and average income of families who incurred a debt for the last three financial years in the following postcodes 2167, 2168, 2170, 2171, 2174, 2178, 2179, 2560, 2564, 2565, and 2566 is provided in the table below. No data is available for postcodes 2178 and 2179 within the required timeframe. Information on postcode 2174 has been withheld due to a low customer population count, which could compromise customers’ confidentiality.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Postcode by Year</th>
<th>Number of Customers</th>
<th>Sum of Family Tax Benefit debt (2a)</th>
<th>Average Family Tax Benefit debt per family (2b)</th>
<th>Average income of families who incurred a debt (2c)</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>3,001</td>
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<td>$914</td>
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<tr>
<td>Postcode by Year</td>
<td>Number of Customers</td>
<td>Sum of Family Tax Benefit debt (2a)</td>
<td>Average Family Tax Benefit debt per family (2b)</td>
<td>Average income of families who incurred a debt (2c)</td>
</tr>
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<td>------------------</td>
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<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>2171</td>
<td>901</td>
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<tr>
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<td>$3,600,222</td>
<td>$1,211</td>
<td>$57,943</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Media Ownership**  
*(Question No. 2322)*

Mr Murphy asked the Minister representing the Minister for Communications, Information Technology and the Arts, in writing, on 6 September 2005:

In respect of the Minister’s answer to Mr Bongiorno’s question “won’t the changes that you outlined on Wednesday lead to Rupert Murdoch and Kerry Packer being able to keep the assets they have now and extend their influence in Australia” on Channel Ten’s *Meet the Press* on 4 September 2005, why did the Minister not rule out the possibility that Mr Packer’s and Mr Murdoch’s media companies would be allowed to buy even more media assets while retaining all of their existing media assets.
Mr McGauran—The Minister for Communications, Information Technology and the Arts has provided the following answer to the honourable member’s question:
As noted in previous responses on this matter, the Government is currently considering its approach to media ownership reform. I have nothing further to add to information provided previously.

Media Ownership
(Question No. 2323)

Mr Murphy asked the Minister representing the Minister for Communications, Information Technology and the Arts, in writing, on 6 September 2005:
(1) Did the Minister read the article in The Age on 5 September 2005 titled ‘Government’s approach to media ownership is “timid”’.
(2) Can the Minister confirm the facts in the reported comment of Glenn Withers, Professor of Public Policy, Australian National University, that “The Australian economy is four times larger and our advertising market has grown sixfold so there’s no reason we can’t have twice as many channels and certainly a fourth channel”; if so, why does the Minister not support the establishment of a fourth television network in Australia after 31 December 2006.
(3) In respect of the comments of Mr Paul Thompson, Chief Executive of Nova and Vega radio network owner DMG that “What Senator Coonan is doing is setting up one enormous operation and it can never have a competitor of equal strength”, can the Minister explain how the recast Broadcasting Services (Media Ownership) Amendment Bill will ensure that there will be more media owners in Australia in the future; if not, why not.

Mr McGauran—The Minister for Communications, Information Technology and the Arts has provided the following answer to the honourable member’s question:
As noted in previous responses on this matter, the Government is currently considering its approach to media ownership reform. I have nothing further to add to information provided previously.

Media Ownership
(Question No. 2325)

Mr Murphy asked the Minister representing the Minister for Communications, Information Technology and the Arts, in writing, on 7 September 2005:
(1) Did the Minister read the article by Mr Fred Brenchley in the Financial Review on 5 September 2005 titled ‘Competition reforms start to unravel’.
(2) In respect of the claim that “with the Government planning a relaxation of media ownership rules, the worry is that media barons will aim straight at the tribunal, creating a more concentrated media sector with no oversight by the ACCC”, will the Minister ensure that media companies still will be ultimately accountable to the ACCC for anti-competitive behaviour after the enactment of the recast Broadcasting Services (Media Ownership) Amendment Bill; if not, why not.

Mr McGauran—The Minister for Communications, Information Technology and the Arts has provided the following answer to the honourable member’s question:
As noted in previous responses on this matter, the Government is currently considering its approach to media ownership reform. I have nothing further to add to information provided previously.

Millennium Development Goals
(Question No. 2330)

Mr Murphy asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs, in writing, on 8 September 2005:
(1) Is he aware that over seventy aid organisations, churches and community groups have joined together to work for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) through the Make Poverty History Campaign and Micah Challenge Australia and believe tackling global poverty should be a national priority.

(2) Is Australia a signatory to the MDG compact of donor nations which aims to halve global poverty by 2015; if not, why not.

(3) Is he aware that most donor nations have now signalled their support for the MDGs by announcing increased support for debt relief, more and improved aid and steps towards improved trade access for poor countries.

(4) Is he aware that Australia now stands out among the 22 OECD developed countries having not yet made a substantial new aid commitment to meet the MDGs.

(5) Will the Government (1) increase the percentage of GNI going to overseas aid and (2) announce a timetable and medium and long term targets for meeting its commitment to increase aid by 0.7% of GNI by 2015; if so, when; if not, why not.

Mr Downer—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) Yes.

(2) Australia was signatory to the Millennium Declaration, which formed the basis of what are now referred to as the Millennium Development Goals.

(3) Yes.

(4) On 15 September, the Prime Minister, the Hon John Howard, announced Australia’s goal to increase its overseas aid allocation to about $4 billion a year by 2010. This represents a doubling of Australia’s Official Development Assistance (ODA) from 2004 levels.

(5) (1) Refer to 4.

(2) Refer to 4. The Government will continue to support the UN target of 0.7 per cent ODA/GNI as an aspiration and endeavour to maintain aid at the highest level, consistent with the needs of partner countries, our own capacity to assist and other priorities for Australian Government expenditure.

New Apprenticeships
(Question No. 2340)

Ms Macklin asked the Minister for Vocational and Technical Education, in writing, on 12 September 2005:

(1) In respect of the New Apprenticeship Centre trading as ‘AMA New Apprenticeships Centre’ and for 2004, (a) how many commencements were facilitated, (b) how many completions were recorded (i) in total and (ii) as a proportion of all commencements, (c) what were the top 20 qualifications obtained, and (d) of the top 20 qualifications obtained, how many commencements of the qualifications were there (i) in total and (ii) as a proportion of commencements.

(2) What is the (a) duration and (b) value of the New Apprenticeship Centre contract with AMA Services WA Pty Ltd.

(3) What is the contracted unit price paid to AMA Services WA Pty Ltd for each New Apprenticeship the New Apprenticeship Centre facilitates.

(4) For each year for which AMA Services WA Pty Ltd has been contracted as a New Apprenticeship Centre, what sum was paid to AMA Services WA Pty Ltd for (a) commencement/registration payments, (b) 6 month-post commencement payments, and (c) completion payments.

Mr Hardgrave—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

QUESTIONS IN WRITING
(1) (a) In the 2004 calendar year, AMA Services (WA) Pty Ltd trading as AMA New Apprenticeships Centre facilitated 5,253 New Apprenticeships commencements.

(b) (i) In the 2004 calendar year, AMA New Apprenticeships Centre facilitated 2,576 New Apprenticeships completions. (ii) This represents 49.04% of the number of commencements facilitated in 2004.

(c) and (d) The following table lists the 20 largest qualifications, by numbers of commencements, facilitated by AMA New Apprenticeships Centre in 2004. Numbers of commencements and share of total commencements are also provided. All data is drawn from DEST’s Training and Youth Internet Management System (TYIMS) database as at 23 September 2005. TYIMS is DEST’s management information system for making payments through the New Apprenticeships Incentives Programme and the New Apprenticeships Support Services contracts.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>National Training Information Service code</th>
<th>Qualification description</th>
<th>(d)(i) Commencements</th>
<th>(d)(ii) Share of total commencements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>HLT30802</td>
<td>Certificate III in Health Support Services (Client/Patient Support Services)</td>
<td>908</td>
<td>17.29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>THH21802</td>
<td>Certificate II in Hospitality (Operations)</td>
<td>277</td>
<td>5.27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>50960</td>
<td>Certificate III in Policing</td>
<td>272</td>
<td>5.18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>WRR20102</td>
<td>Certificate II in Retail Operations</td>
<td>259</td>
<td>4.93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>WRH30100</td>
<td>Certificate III in Hairdressing</td>
<td>244</td>
<td>4.64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>BSB30101</td>
<td>Certificate III in Business</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>3.96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>UTE31199</td>
<td>Certificate III in Electrotechnology Systems Electrician</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>3.81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>51190</td>
<td>Certificate I in Workplace Readiness</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>3.35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>BSB20101</td>
<td>Certificate II in Business</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>3.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>ICT40102</td>
<td>Certificate IV in Customer Contact</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>3.06%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>AUR31099</td>
<td>Certificate III in Automotive Mechanical (Light Vehicle)</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>2.80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>CSC30201</td>
<td>Certificate III in Correctional Practice (Custodial)</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>2.55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>THH31502</td>
<td>Certificate III in Hospitality (Commercial Cookery)</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>2.25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>WRR30202</td>
<td>Certificate III in Retail Operations</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>2.23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>50718</td>
<td>Certificate III in Carpentry &amp; Joinery</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>2.17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>CHC30102</td>
<td>Certificate III in Aged Care Work</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>1.90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>BCG30698</td>
<td>Certificate III in General Construction (Bricklaying/Blocklaying)</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>1.20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>51059</td>
<td>Certificate III in General Plumbing and Gasfitting</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>1.20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>LMF30402</td>
<td>Certificate III in Furniture Making (Cabinet Making)</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>1.16%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 20   | PRM20198                                 | Certificate II in Asset Maintenance (Cleaning Operations) | 58                   | 1.10%                               

QUESTIONS IN WRITING
(2) (a) AMA Services (WA) Pty Ltd’s contract to provide New Apprenticeships Support Services runs from 1 July 2003 to 30 June 2006. (b) The total value of this contract is $4,488,000.

(3) The unit price for AMA Services (WA) Pty Ltd’s contract to provide New Apprenticeships Support Services is commercial-in-confidence.

(4) The following table provides (a) commencement / recommencement, (b) six month post-commencement and (c) completion Fee-for-Service payments, exclusive of GST, made to AMA New Apprenticeships Centre for each year that it has been contracted to provide New Apprenticeships Support Services. All data is drawn from TYIMS as at 23 September 2005. Note that the six-month post-commencement payment did not come into effect until 1 July 2003.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Payment type</th>
<th>1998</th>
<th>1999</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2002</th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>2005</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(a) commencement / recommencement</td>
<td>$79,050</td>
<td>$278,595</td>
<td>$431,490</td>
<td>$395,715</td>
<td>$442,556</td>
<td>$692,900</td>
<td>$1,313,060</td>
<td>$932,675</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) six month post-commencement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>$157,440</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(c) completion</td>
<td>$2,425</td>
<td>$17,640</td>
<td>$41,796</td>
<td>$49,672</td>
<td>$44,888</td>
<td>$104,179</td>
<td>$272,830</td>
<td>$240,720</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cross-Media Ownership Rules
(Question No. 2368)

Mr Murphy asked the Minister representing the Minister for Communications, Information Technology and the Arts, in writing, on 14 September 2005:

Further to the answer to question No. 1657 (Hansard, 18 August 2005, page 197), why will the Minister not guarantee that the enactment of the re-drafted Broadcasting Services Amendment (Media Ownership) Bill 2002 will rule out further concentration of media ownership in Australia.

Mr McGauran—The Minister for Communications, Information Technology and the Arts has provided the following answer to the honourable member’s question:

I have nothing further to add to the information provided previously on this matter. As noted in previous responses, the Government is currently considering its approach to media ownership reform.

Cross-Media Ownership Rules
(Question No. 2369)

Mr Murphy asked the Minister representing the Minister for Communications, Information Technology and the Arts, in writing, on 14 September 2005:

Further to the answer to question No. 1658 (Hansard, 11 August 2005, page 144), why does the Minister not explain how the Government will protect public interest and maintain a diverse and vibrant media sector while pursuing its objective to amend Australia’s cross-media ownership laws.

Mr McGauran—The Minister for Communications, Information Technology and the Arts has provided the following answer to the honourable member’s question:

I have nothing further to add to the information provided previously on this matter. As noted in previous responses, the Government is currently considering its approach to media ownership reform.

Cross-Media Ownership Rules
(Question No. 2370)

Mr Murphy asked the Minister representing the Minister for Communications, Information Technology and the Arts, in writing, on 14 September 2005:
Further to the answer to question No. 1490 (Hansard, 10 August 2005, page 142), why does the Minister not explain how concentrating commercial media ownership can be in the public interest and good for Australia’s democracy.

Mr McGauran—The Minister for Communications, Information Technology and the Arts has provided the following answer to the honourable member’s question:

I have nothing further to add to the information provided previously on this matter. As noted in previous responses, the Government is currently considering its approach to media ownership reform.

**Media Ownership**

*(Question No. 2371)*

Mr Murphy asked the Minister representing the Minister for Communications, Information Technology and the Arts, in writing, on 14 September 2005:

1. Has the Minister seen the article titled ‘Murdoch accused of predatory pricing’ in the Financial Review on 13 September 2005 which reported that “News Ltd has been accused of using its management control of Foxtel to force the pay TV group to make a predatory bid for the Australian Football League broadcast rights to destroy its only rival in pay TV sports broadcasting”.
2. Is the Minister aware that this matter is currently before the Federal Court of Australia.
3. Does the Minister intend to introduce the re-cast Broadcasting Services Amendment (Media Ownership) Bill 2002 into Parliament before the outcome of the Federal Court decision is known.

Mr McGauran—The Minister for Communications, Information Technology and the Arts has provided the following answer to the honourable member’s question:

1. Yes.
2. Yes.
3. I have nothing further to add to the information provided previously.

**Commonwealth Property**

*(Question No. 2390)*

Mr Bowen asked the Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations, in writing, on 15 September 2005:

1. What properties, or lettable floor areas at partially occupied properties, owned by the Commonwealth and in possession of the department and each agency in the Minister’s portfolio, are currently not utilised by the department or agency in question, and are not let out.
2. For how long has each property, or part of a property, identified in part (1) been vacant and why has it been left vacant.

Mr Andrews—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

DEWR does not own any properties and of the leased properties under the property portfolio there is no vacant lettable areas or lettable areas not being utilised.